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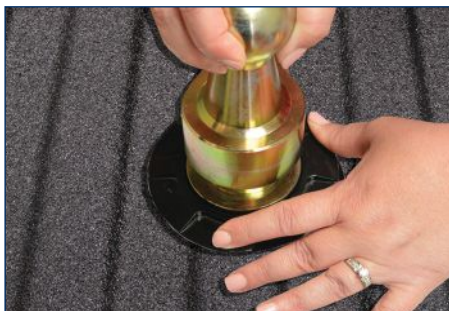
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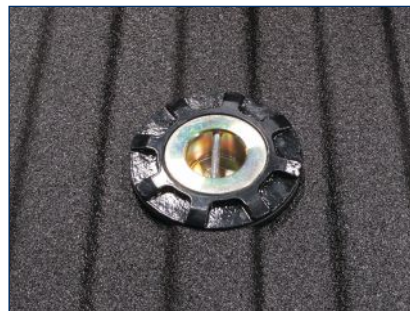
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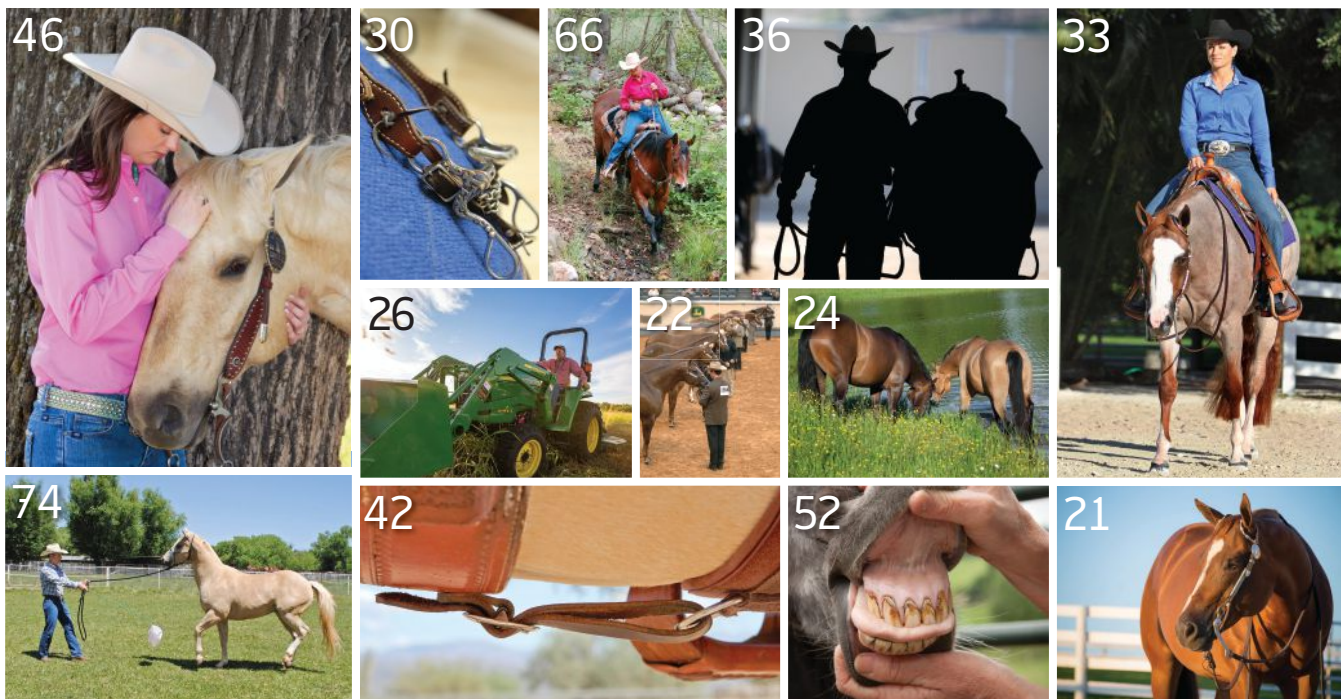


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On the cover: Flashy Looking Touch, a 4-year-old Quarter Horse gelding owned by Jamie Oakley of Texas. 'Watson,' who competes in amateur and open Western pleasure divisions, loves to be treated to French fries. Photo by Mallory Beinborn

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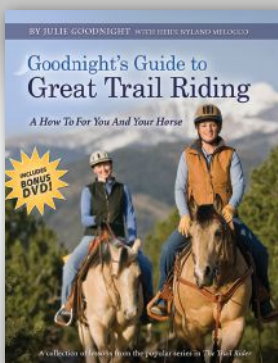
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ACTIVE INTEREST MEDIA

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ARE YOU DEWORMING YOUR HORSE TOO OFTEN?



If you're deworming your horse six times a year, it could be as much as four times too often. In fact, the one-size-fits-all approach of deworming every two months is obsolete, according to the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP).¹ In many cases, two treatments may be all your horse needs.

DIFFERENT PARASITE CHALLENGES

The concept of routine deworming started more than 40 years ago, when large strongyles were the predominant internal parasite in horses. Small strongyles are more common in horses today, but require properly timed, effective treatments instead of routine treatment.

FREQUENT DEWORMING CAN CAUSE RESISTANCE

When parasites are overexposed to certain treatments, they can become resistant to them. And that leaves horse owners with fewer options. Small strongyles have been shown to develop widespread resistance to fenbendazole,² one of the older dewormers.

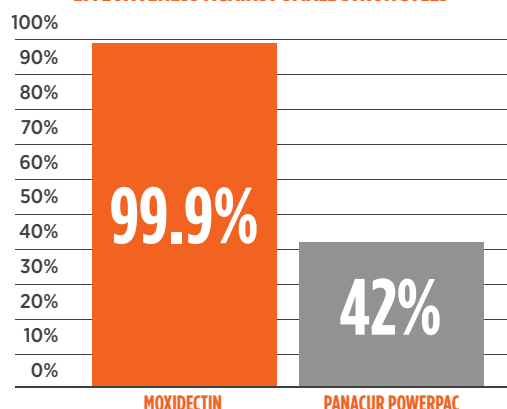
AN INDIVIDUALIZED DEWORMING™ PLAN

Because every horse is unique, new AAEP guidelines¹ recommend that you work with your veterinarian to tailor a parasite control plan to your horse. Based on your horse's age, fecal egg count results and parasite exposure risks, the plan should include effective deworming products administered during peak parasite seasons.

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EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST SMALL STRONGYLES*



TO DETERMINE YOUR HORSE'S INDIVIDUAL PARASITE RISK PROFILE, VISIT IDMYHORSE.COM.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION: Do not use QUEST Gel or QUEST PLUS Gel in foals less than 6 months of age or in sick, debilitated and underweight horses. These products should not be used in other animal species, as severe adverse reactions, including fatalities in dogs, may result.

¹ American Association of Equine Practitioners. AAEP Parasite Control Guidelines. Available at: <http://www.aaep.org/custdocs/ParasiteControlGuidelinesFinal.pdf>. Updated 2013. Accessed January 12, 2015.

² Kaplan RM. Anthelmintic resistance in nematodes of horses. *Vet Res* 2002;33:491-507.

³ Mason ME, Voris ND, Ortis HA, Geeding AA, Kaplan RM. Comparison of a single dose of moxidectin and a five-day course of fenbendazole to reduce and suppress cyathostomin fecal egg counts in a herd of embryo transfer-recipient mares. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2014;245(8):944-951.

*This study compared QUEST (moxidectin) Gel with Panacur Powerpac (fenbendazole).



When It's Time to Hire a Trainer

Few things beat your own training accomplishments, but nothing beats good help when you need it. In "Mileage Plan" (page 36), Bob Avila recommends tapping in to the greater experience of others. Go online this month for his advice on "How (and Why) to Find a Trainer."

Anti-Spook Method

Trainer Ty Brazeal tackles chronic spooking in this month's Problem Solvers (page 74). Visit the Web site for video of his technique.

Heavenly Action

All-around gelding Heavenly Mac is this month's We'd Love to Own horse (page 21). Head over to the Web site to see him in action.

Old But Precious

You value your senior horse and want him to last. Find "Senior Horse Care Tips" online, and see page 52 for more.

Stable Vice, Or...?

Weaving, cribbing, and other equine behaviors—are they vices, or something else? Learn more online from "Stable Vice or Stereotype?"

Join the Herd!

We love hearing from you! Send all high-resolution images for *Conformation Clinic*; *Problem Solvers* questions; and any feedback, ideas, photos, and letters to HorseandRider@aimmedia.com. Or mail correspondence to 2520 55th St., #210, Boulder, CO 80301.

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¹ Mason ME, Voris ND, Ortis HA, Geeding AA, Kaplan RM. Comparison of a single dose of moxidectin and a five-day course of fenbendazole to reduce and suppress cyathostomin fecal egg counts in a herd of embryo transfer-recipient mares. *J Anim Vet Med Assoc* 2014;245(8):944-951.

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From the Editor

By Jennifer Paulson

Old Paint Is Good for Us All



A LITTLE MORE THAN A YEAR AGO, MY BOYS CAME into their first horse. (See “A Pot of Gold,” *From the Editor*, July 2014, *HR&R*.) They’d been around our family horses all of their lives, but they’d never had one they could really ride and feel was their own. They’ve taken to Old Paint quite well, each in their own way.

With their horse-filled summer under way, I’m being reminded that their having a horse is a mutually beneficial situation. Here’s why.

Mom’s Perks of the Kids’ Horse

1. They’re into what I’m into. For one of the first times in my life as a mom, my kids share an interest with me! Up to now, it’s been sports, camping, fishing—which are all great things that they’ve learned from Dad, but they’re not *my* interests. The kids are even starting to really understand what I do and are interested in my work. When I tell my oldest son which trainer I’m going to visit, he’s even a little excited that Mom gets to meet famous people.

2. It gives me a killer rebuttal. When one of the boys says, “But Mom, Stevie gets to play four different sports/has this coveted toy/doesn’t have to do barn chores,” I have the perfect reply. “Stevie also doesn’t have a horse.” Instant perspective, even for their young 4- and 7-year-old minds.

3. I have the antidote to a bad day. When a morning starts out with bickering, whining, and generally in a bad place, I can load up the boys and go to the barn. The time spent quietly grooming Old Paint together (or while the kids play with the cat and I do the brushing) starts to erase the angst. By the time we’re done riding, we’re all in a good spot—happy, at ease, and over the morning’s conflicts.

4. The kids and Old Paint inspire me in my work. We all hit roadblocks and feel inspiration wane in our careers (and in our horse lives). When this happens, all I have to do is look at the pairs of boots by my front door and remember that I’m helping to form the future of the horse industry—both as a mom and in producing this magazine. That’s pretty big motivation to get going again. (*Note:* If you’re looking for inspiration in your riding, you’ll want to read “Rediscover Your Horse,” beginning on page 46, by Juli S. Thorson.)

5. Their horse lives are enhancing their school lives. Particularly with my oldest son, his experiences with Old Paint have helped him in school. He’s more confident in what he can do, he’s up for a challenge, and he’s learned to set goals. Most importantly, he understands that achieving a goal takes a lot of work. You can’t place a value on those lessons.

Please share how your horses have helped your kids—I’d love to read about it and share a few stories in the magazine. Send your stories to the email address below. □

Jennifer Paulson

You can reach Jennifer Paulson at jpaulson@aimmedia.com.



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CAUTION: Federal law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian. For client-friendly information on navicular syndrome and lameness exams please refer to www.equinelameness.com. As with all drugs, side effects may occur. In field studies, the most common side effects reported were signs of discomfort or nervousness, cramping, pawing, and/or colic within 2 hours post-treatment. Osphos should not be used in pregnant or lactating mares, or mares intended for breeding. Use of Osphos in patients with conditions affecting renal function or mineral or electrolyte homeostasis is not recommended. Refer to the prescribing information for complete details or visit www.dechra-us.com.

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INDICATION: For the control of clinical signs associated with navicular syndrome in horses.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Horses with hypersensitivity to clodronate disodium should not receive OSPHOS.

WARNINGS: Do not use in horses intended for human consumption.

HUMAN WARNINGS: Not for human use. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children. Consult a physician in case of accidental human exposure.

PRECAUTIONS: As a class, bisphosphonates may be associated with gastrointestinal and renal toxicity. Sensitivity to drug associated adverse reactions varies with the individual patient. Renal and gastrointestinal adverse reactions may be associated with plasma concentrations of the drug. Bisphosphonates are excreted by the kidney; therefore, conditions causing renal impairment may increase plasma bisphosphonate concentrations resulting in an increased risk for adverse reactions. Concurrent administration of other potentially nephrotoxic drugs should be approached with caution and renal function should be monitored. Use of bisphosphonates in patients with conditions or diseases affecting renal function is not recommended. Administration of bisphosphonates has been associated with abdominal pain (colic), discomfort, and agitation in horses. Clinical signs usually occur shortly after drug administration and may be associated with alterations in intestinal motility. In horses treated with OSPHOS these clinical signs usually began within 2 hours of treatment. Horses should be monitored for at least 2 hours following administration of OSPHOS.

Bisphosphonates affect plasma concentrations of some minerals and electrolytes such as calcium, magnesium and potassium, immediately post-treatment, with effects lasting up to several hours. Caution should be used when administering bisphosphonates to horses with conditions affecting mineral or electrolyte homeostasis (e.g. hyperkalemic periodic paralysis, hypocalcemia, etc.).

The safe use of OSPHOS has not been evaluated in horses less than 4 years of age. The effect of bisphosphonates on the skeleton of growing horses has not been studied; however, bisphosphonates inhibit osteoclast activity which impacts bone turnover and may affect bone growth.

Bisphosphonates should not be used in pregnant or lactating mares, or mares intended for breeding. The safe use of OSPHOS has not been evaluated in breeding horses or pregnant or lactating mares. Bisphosphonates are incorporated into the bone matrix, from where they are gradually released over periods of months to years. The extent of bisphosphonate incorporation into adult bone, and hence, the amount available for release back into the systemic circulation, is directly related to the total dose and duration of bisphosphonate use. Bisphosphonates have been shown to cause fetal developmental abnormalities in laboratory animals. The uptake of bisphosphonates into fetal bone may be greater than into maternal bone creating a possible risk for skeletal or other abnormalities in the fetus. Many drugs, including bisphosphonates, may be excreted in milk and may be absorbed by nursing animals.

Increased bone fragility has been observed in animals treated with bisphosphonates at high doses or for long periods of time. Bisphosphonates inhibit bone resorption and decrease bone turnover which may lead to an inability to repair micro damage within the bone. In humans, atypical femur fractures have been reported in patients on long term bisphosphonate therapy; however, a causal relationship has not been established.

ADVERSE REACTIONS: The most common adverse reactions reported in the field study were clinical signs of discomfort or nervousness, colic and/or pawing. Other signs reported were lip licking, yawning, head shaking, injection site swelling, and hives/pruritus.

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(clodronate injection)

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We Hear You

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Life Imitates Art

Reader Karen Luckett of California submitted this photo of her mare Dakota wearing a sun visor to accompany her *You Said It* contribution (see page 80). Interestingly, that was *before* she saw last month's *You Said It* illustration, which featured a horse wearing a visor.



E-mail your letters to HorseandRider@aimmedia.com. Or, send them to *Horse&Rider*, 2520 55th St., #210, Boulder, CO 80301. To be considered for publication, your submission must include your full name and your state. Published letters are subject to editing for brevity, clarity, and accuracy.

Baby Steps Bandwagon

I'm a first-time horse owner. I've had my horse for 10 years now, and I am, of course, constantly learning and trying to improve myself and my horse. I *love* your magazine. I've learned so much and the articles are such a benefit for me. I also have fear issues, as I was hurt several years back, and it was so hard to try to get back on. I've done

the baby steps that Franklin Crumpler talked about in your June 2015 issue (*We Hear You*), and it certainly works. My last ride with Shadow was wonderful. I gained a lot of confidence, and I'm ready to go again. Your magazine is my horse bible, and I thank you very much. Keep up the good work.

MARY BOUCHER, Montana

Readers Respond

We asked our Facebook fans if they prefer a gaited horse or a more stock-type mount. Here's a sampling of what they had to say. To join in the fun, be sure to "like" us at [Facebook.com/HorseandRider](https://www.facebook.com/HorseandRider).



LeeAnne Deardorff Goen I own a stock horse; however, I rode a Tennessee Walker on the trails a few years ago, and it was so great. Now I know why gaited breeds are gaining popularity with Baby Boomers. Kinder on the joints for sure.

Gina Killingsworth Gaited. I have ridden Paints, Quarter Horses, Arabs—but nearing 50 years old, I love my Tennessee Walking Horse.

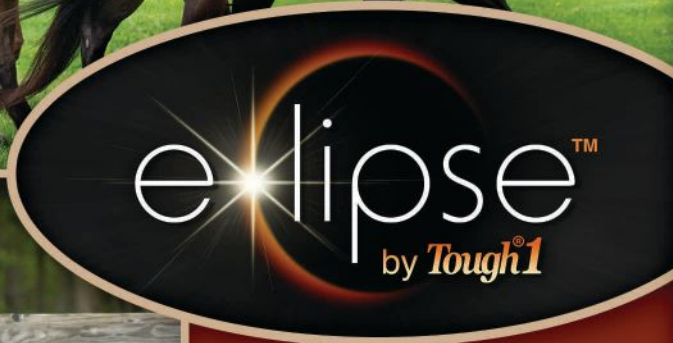
Barbara Black I've always ridden stock horses on the trail but would love to try a gaited horse.

Darrell Rabun I ride both gaited and Quarter Horses. I find the Quarter Horse is the best all-around horse.

Kim Sachek Stock! Gaited travel too fast to be able to see issues that can occur on the trail.



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Mare Hates New Home—Help!

What can be done to help a horse feel more at ease at a new barn?

Q Two months ago, I moved my 10-year-old Quarter Horse mare from a small barn (where she's lived for the past eight years with the same caretakers) to another, much larger and busier full-service boarding stable in a nearby town. Because of my schedule, I'm able to see her only a couple times a week, so I pay for all the extras, including grooming and exercise sessions. Even with the same level of care, however, she doesn't act like herself. She seems unhappy and skittish—almost unrecognizable to me when I see her. Is she having trouble adjusting, and what more can I do to help?

BETH HOLCOMB, Georgia

A Moving to a new home is stressful for horses. Without warning they're taken from their home, family, and friends, and suddenly life is completely different. Their grazing, routine, field mates, and handlers all change, and it may take them months—or even years—to feel relaxed in the new environment.

Your mare has had one home for most of her 10-year life, and contact with a limited number of people. That means this move will have been particularly hard for her, and the inevitable stress is making her feel unsettled and nervous. This may be in part why you're feeling a lack of connection with her.

She may be wary of all the new people now handling her, and this can affect her relationship with you, too.

There are several things you can do to improve your relationship with her in her new home. First, to help her relax, make sure her species-specific needs are met and she has the freedom to display natural horse behaviors. Think of “the Three Fs”—friends, forage, and freedom. Ask the stable managers to maximize her time turned out with calm, friendly horses, and ensure constant access to forage. If she must be stalled at all, even with the paid exercise sessions, make sure she has plenty to do to keep her occupied (see box).



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Stalling Doesn't Help

Horses kept stalled for long periods can become stressed from that alone. To counter the stress, feed a choice of forage on the floor or in a ground-level manger; this mimics natural grazing behavior and reduces the risk of frustration. Vegetable "kebabs" can also help give a horse something to do; to make one, simply thread carrots, parsnips, and turnips onto a strong cord and hang it in the stall.

To regain her trust at the new stable, make sure she associates you with good experiences. Give her a holiday from ridden work and have some fun together. Hang out with her as much as possible, even scheduling an extra visit to the new barn each week for a few weeks, until she adapts. Spend time grooming her and scratching her favorite itchy spots. Scratching around the base of the neck, mane, and withers area will simulate mutual groom-

ing and lower her heart rate, helping her relax.

Take her for walks in hand with another calm horse to graze nearby. This is a great way for her to learn about her new environment and re-bond with you. In every interaction with her, focus on the behavior you want and reward that, either with a treat or a big, lip-curling withers scratch. This promotes calmness and trust, whereas punishing her for

unwanted behavior does *not*.

Finally, consider arranging for just one staff member at the new barn to work consistently with your mare for her grooming and exercise sessions. With just one person to adjust to rather than a varying crew, she might adapt to her new surroundings faster.

JUSTINE HARRISON

Certified Horse Behavior Consultant
equinebehaviourist.co.uk

HorseandRider.com

For more on equine behavior, see "Stable Vice or Stereotypie?" at the Web site.

Send horse health and behavior questions to jfmeyer@aimmedia.com. Include horse's age, breed, gender.

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HR 2015-08

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Cowboy Magic Super Bodyshine is the ticket for a smooth finish, leaving

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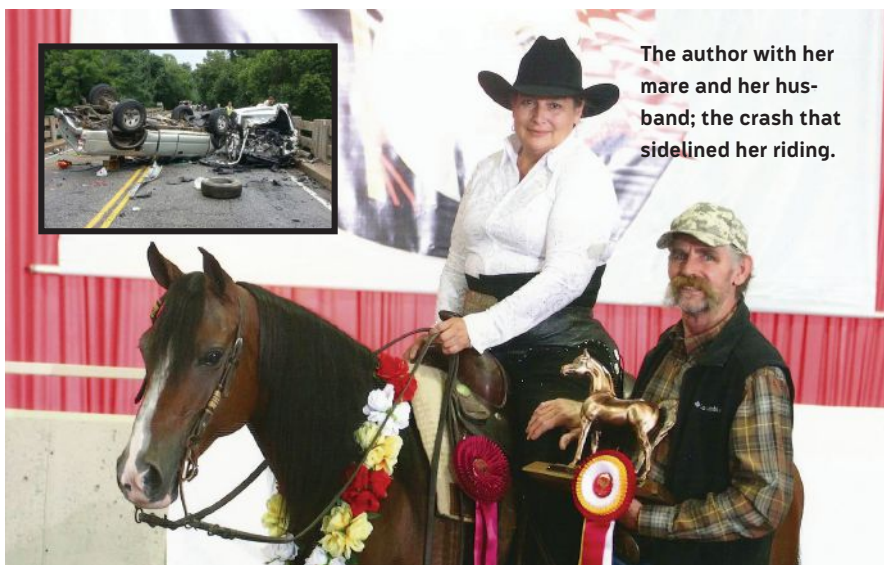


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Your Stories



The author with her mare and her husband; the crash that sidelined her riding.

The Long Road Back

After the terrible car crash, would she ever ride again?

By Lynn Bates

I was on my way home from errands that afternoon when an oncoming car veered into my lane and hit me head on. My pickup landed upside-down on the highway, with me trapped inside it.

I'd had a 50-pound bag of dog food and two cartons of eggs in the cab with me. Now the dog food was strewn all over the highway plus tangled in my hair, along with broken eggs.

That was August of 2013. Believe it or not, what I found myself thinking about as I lay in the wreckage was the end-of-August entry deadline for the Arabian Nationals. I was banged up, sure, but I figured I could bounce back and still be ready to show by the time the event rolled around in October.

Little did I know.

When the paramedics arrived, they asked if I could move my legs, and it was only then I realized I couldn't move at all. I felt no pain until they removed

the pickup's door and pulled me out. Then I knew I was badly hurt.

In the ambulance, the EMT kept asking my name and other questions to keep me alert. All I wanted him to do was get the cell phone out of my pocket and call my husband, then give me something for the pain. He did neither.

Fixated...on Riding

My right ankle was crushed. The surgeon fitted me with an "external fixator" to stabilize it—pins through my shinbone and ankle, connected by bars running down the front of my calf. I wore that for two and a half months.

I'd also suffered a burst fracture in the vertebrae of my back. I wore a clam-shell brace around my torso for three months (and still have the rods and pins they inserted to fix things).

All told, I spent five weeks in the hospital. The 2013 Nationals were out, obviously. Now the question was, would I ever heal sufficiently to ride again at all?

In May of 2014 I asked my back doctor about riding again. She said it wasn't advisable. Then, when she saw the tears I couldn't keep back, she relented.

"If it means that much to you," she said, "go ahead and ride."

Back on...Gingerly

On August 8, a year after the accident and following nine months of physical therapy, I mounted my Arabian mare Zee Princess Lena for the first time since my injuries. She's a well-broke reiner; my trainer is my husband. He only let me walk that first day. The next day, when I insisted on loping, the muscles in my back were so weak that two laps of the round pen were all I could manage.

I continued to ride, though it was a challenge. Just walking on my own legs is painful, and every time I mount up I have to conquer the fear of getting hurt again. The reward is the ride itself, and by the time I'm ready to dismount, I feel healed.

Eventually came a stab of hope for showing again. I had to enter by the end of August for the 2014 Arabian Nationals. Plus, to compete at the Tulsa, Oklahoma, event, my mare and I had to qualify at a local show at the end of September.

'Let's Do This'

If I could ride well enough to qualify, I figured I'd go to the Nationals just for the fun of it, without worrying how competitive we'd be. My mare was 16 and I was 59. My thinking was, *Let's do this now, while we can.*

Zee and I earned the points we needed. And, at the Nationals in October, we won our first reserve national championship in the intermediate amateur reining division. Credit for this goes to my loving family, some excellent doctors, my wonderful physical therapists—and the greatest little mare I've ever had the privilege to ride. □

Lynn Bates lives on a small ranch in Wyandotte, Oklahoma, where her husband, Bruce, and youngest son, Dillon, train and show Arabian horses (Bates Training Center). Lynn is recovering from two additional surgeries on her ankle but hopes to be riding again soon.

Have a poignant, humorous, or educational story to share? E-mail jfmeyer@aimmedia.com; 675-word maximum.

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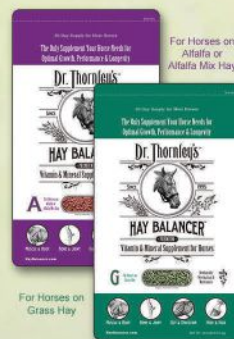


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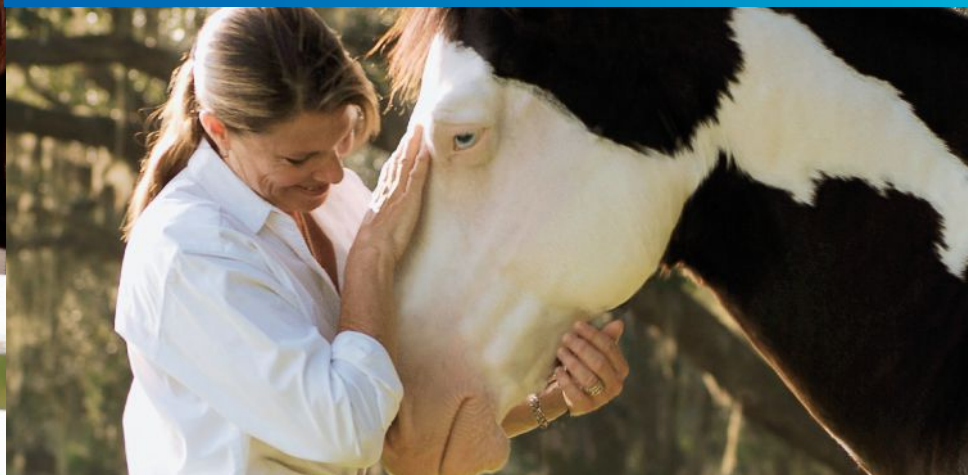
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WE'D LOVE TO OWN

Heavenly Mac

Details: 2004 AQHA gelding by Macs Good N Plenty and out of Heavens Fantasy, by Zippos Heaven Sent.

Barn name: Mac.

Owned and shown by: Susan Knapp of Van Meter, Iowa.

A family figurehead: Select rider Susan Knapp competes in all-around events with Mac. She's won numerous accolades with the horse, including a reserve title at the 2013 AQHA Select World Show. "Mac is well decorated in every age group and ability level," she says. "My granddaughter was the 2014 reserve All American

Quarter Horse Congress champion in novice youth Western riding in the 14-to-18-year-old category and will show him at the 2015 Youth World Show."

Treat magnet: "He likes to eat," Knapp confides. "We have to watch his weight, because he'll just chow down. He loves apples, peppermints, and blueberry mini wheat cereal." Knapp shares with a laugh, "He takes small bites of a treat, a little at a time. Just when I think he's almost finished, he'll take an even smaller bite."

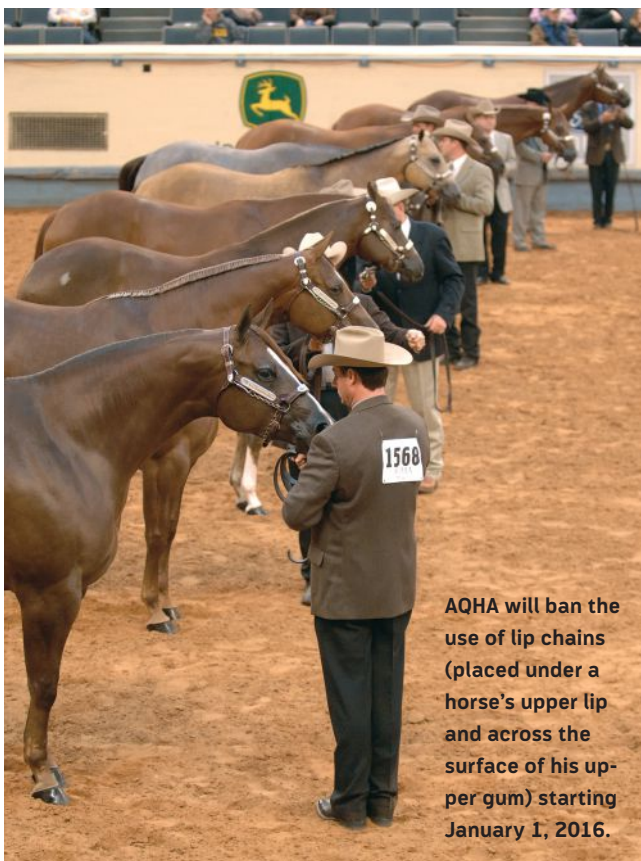
Priceless: Susan explains that even though she and her husband own many

horses, Mac is the only without a price tag. "Out of all of our horses, he's the easiest to get along with," she says. "I've had offers to buy him, but I turn them down because he's our family horse. I can put my grandson on him or my husband and know he's not going to let them get hurt. He never gets mad and has no bad habits."

...Alexis Bennett

HorseandRider.com

Visit HorseandRider.com to watch videos of Mac in action.



AQHA will ban the use of lip chains (placed under a horse's upper lip and across the surface of his upper gum) starting January 1, 2016.

Horse Welfare Rules

Among new animal-welfare rules from the American Quarter Horse Association are those that strengthen penalties as well as publish the names and offenses of violators. Rules affecting show horses specifically include the barring of lip chains in halter classes, new penalties for some drug violations, and strengthened sanctions against tail alterations that restrict movement. The lip-chain ruling, which takes effect in January 2016, has sparked an online petition to rescind it. AQHA's president, Dr. Glenn Blodgett, has called the use of lip chains, especially by novices, "simply not humane." As reported here in January, new rules from the FBI will categorize animal cruelty as a top-tier offense, giving anti-abuse laws in all states more clout. For the latest on AQHA's anti-abuse efforts, including listings of violators, go to aqha.com/animalwelfare.

DISCOVERING ENDURANCE RIDING

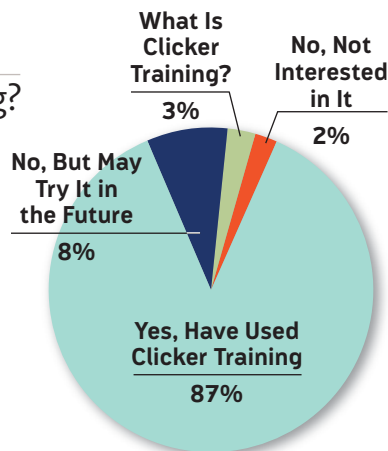
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Cost of a booklet featuring first-person accounts written by endurance enthusiasts. To request a copy, email the American Endurance Ride Conference at aerc@foothill.net, or call (866) 271-2372 (aerc.org).

GALLOP POLL

Clicker Training?

We asked if you've ever tried clicker training with any of your horses. At right is a breakdown of the responses we received. (To participate in future polls, "like" us at our Facebook page.)



RED SHIRT FUTURITY

'As an industry we need to recognize that not all horses are physically [or] mentally ready for the rigors of training to be shown as 3-year-olds.'

...Flyer explaining the Red Shirt Futurity, an April 2015 event in Nampa, Idaho, for 4-year-old reining horses not shown in any 3-year-old futurities (gwreining.com).



Equine Job Postings

New resource: Horse-oriented online "jobs board," hosted by the Lexington, Kentucky-based Certified Horsemanship Association. Listings range from farm caretaker and camp riding instructor to professor of equestrian studies and therapeutic-riding coordinator.

Check it out: To see listings or learn how jobs may be posted, go to bit.ly/equinejobs.



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Horses always need access to water; summer heat and other factors can increase water needs.

Be Water Smart

On average, a 1,100-pound horse drinks about 10 gallons of water a day. That amount can double, however, especially during summertime, due to: **Temperature**—temps above 85 degrees F cause horses to drink more, especially if they're sweating. **Feed**—hay and grain/concentrates are low in moisture and will require horses to drink more than if they're on lush pasture. **Exercise**—any type of physical activity will increase a horse's water needs. **Health**—a horse with diarrhea that's eating normally will increase his water intake to compensate for fluid loss. **Lactation**—mares with nursing foals require as much as 80 percent more water for milk production.

Source: Bluebonnet Feeds

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The lowdown: Priscilla's Grass for Horses is a carton containing blended-grains grass seeds in soil that you grow at home into a healthy, sugar-free treat.

How it works: Water the soil daily and watch the grass grow. Purchase cartons individually or subscribe to a monthly delivery service.

Learn more: (866) 368-9705; bit.ly/equinegrasstreats.



CAPILLARY REFILL TIME

1to2

Number of seconds before a healthy horse's gum tissue returns to its normal pink color after you depress it for a moment with your thumb. If it takes longer than this, your horse may be dehydrated (equinenews.com).

Q: Do swaybacked horses require special saddles?

A: Not necessarily, although saddle fit *is* paramount for a swaybacked horse. A good fit will compensate for the gap that otherwise occurs under the middle of the saddle, causing undue pressure on the withers and loins. A saddle-fit expert can help you find the right saddle/pad combination. The flexibility of a treeless saddle might adapt well to an extremely swayed back. There are also "swayback pads" designed with extra material in the middle to correct the bridging of the saddle that can otherwise occur on a swayed back. (For more on therapeutic saddle pads, see page 28.)



Summer sores, the inflammatory skin reaction to a Habronema stomach-worm infection, can plague your horse at this time of year. Take a two-pronged approach to fully protect your horses: (1) Deworm with a moxidectin product to kill the parasite; and (2) Reduce housefly populations, as flies help spread the Habronema larva into open wounds or into tissues around your horses' mouth, lips, eyes, and groin areas.

Source: Zoetis Equine News

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Photo: Carol Walker; Illustration: Celia Strain



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To achieve the deepest possible heel, stand in your stirrups and let your heels sink as low as possible. Then note exactly what that feels like in your calves and ankles. Memorize the feeling, and then try to replicate it once you sit back down and resume riding.

Back-to-School Cool

What it is: Horseplay backpack from Noble Outfitters.

Why she'll want it: This lightweight daypack will let your young rider pack her helmet and her homework to the barn in one cute, colorful bag. Bonus: She can customize it with her favorite discipline patch.

Why you'll approve: The 600-denier fabric has a water-repellant finish and heavy-duty interior coating for easy care. A padded tablet compartment will keep her electronics safe.

More info: \$69.99; nobleoutfitters.com.



Safety on the Trail

This Ovation Z-15 helmet has all the design elements a safety-conscious trail rider is looking for. The lightweight, low-profile design offers a dial for easy fit adjustment and high-flow vents and a removable, washable Coolmax liner to keep you comfortable. Choose from black/navy and dark brown. It retails for \$109.95, and you can find it at ovationriding.com.



Updated 3E Series

You've told us that most of you keep your horses at home, on small-acreage properties. A utility tractor, such as the John Deere 3032E or 3038E, can up the convenience and efficiency of your place. Use it for hauling items around your property, blading/grading, digging, tilling, and mowing pastures.

"These tractors are easy to operate, easy to maintain, easy to own, and easy to buy," said Scott Schadler, John Deere product marketing manager. "No matter what the chore, there's an E Series tractor that delivers John Deere quality and reliability—at a budget-friendly price. In fact, the 1023E sub-compact tractor has a suggested U.S. list price starting at under \$12,000."

More info: Visit your local dealer or johndeere.com/eseries.

Your Horse's Perfect Trailer

Not every trailer is suitable for every horse. Here are questions to consider when you shop for your horse's new ride.

Slant or Straight?	Ramp or Step?	Two, Three, or More?	Got Lights?
Try your horse in both styles of trailers to see which he prefers or if one better accommodates his size.	Some horses refuse to unload without the security of a ramp to descend. Be sure of your horse's preference.	It's not just about how many horses you'll haul. A large horse might require more than one trailer slot.	Look for interior lights if you'll load at night or if your horse just likes the extra comfort of full visibility when loading.

Featherlite horse trailers are fit for your life – and your horse. With safety features and unmatched durability, owning a Featherlite horse trailer gives you more value for the long haul.

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* Trailers may be shown with options. New feed doors available on 2015 model year trailers.

BY UNIVERSAL TRAILER

Saddle-Pad Options, Pro & Con

There's a lot to know about modern saddle pads. Our primer will help you narrow your choices.

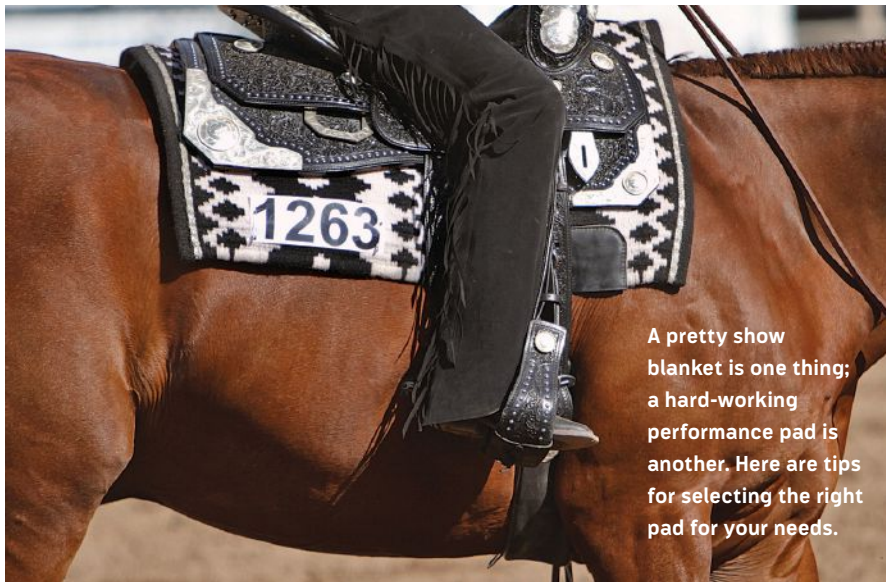
Need a new saddle pad? The variety of choices available today can be overwhelming. For best decision-making, scan our key information, investigate the market yourself, then check with someone knowledgeable for advice before you make your final selection. (Good sources: Your trainer, a saddle-fitting expert, or a veterinarian who rides.)

Key Issues

- **Essentials.** The main function of a pad is to assure the comfort of your horse by easing the compression and impact on his back, while providing cooling. Depending on features and materials, pads also can help prevent saddle slip and mitigate minor fit problems. (Saddle fit is always more important than pad type, however; don't expect your pad to compensate for a poorly fitting saddle.)
- **Use.** How you ride your horse affects what type of pad you need. Long trail rides in warm weather, for example, require a pad with good wicking action to cool your horse's back. Running barrels, by contrast, requires a pad with reliable grip and good shock absorption. In general, short, easy rides of any type have fewer padding requirements than intense athletic endeavors. You may well opt to own more than one pad to meet all your needs.
- **Care.** Pads vary widely in their care requirements (see box), and your climate will figure into the choice equation, too.

A Word About Care

Some pads can be machine-washed; others require rinsing with water under pressure (as at a car wash) or a good garden-hosing; still others want just air-drying and a thorough brushing. For details on caring for various types of pads, go to bit.ly/saddle-pad-care.



A pretty show blanket is one thing; a hard-working performance pad is another. Here are tips for selecting the right pad for your needs.

For example, in a damp environment, a wool felt pad may never dry out completely and can harbor mildew and fungi.

Material Matters

- **Wool.** Both fleece and felt (compressed wool fibers) are time-honored options for good reason. Wool provides excellent cushioning that doesn't "bottom out" (compress until shock absorption is lessened), and it wicks extremely well for maximum cooling. Wool is also expensive and, because it absorbs so much sweat, can be hard to dry. (Note: Not all "wool" pads are pure wool; if it matters to you, double-check contents.)
- **Synthetic fleece.** Depending on type, synthetics may have some of the same qualities of wool fleece at a lighter weight and reduced price; they're also easy to launder.
- **Closed-cell foam.** Sometimes called neoprene, this foam bounces back immediately and can be squishy or firm depending on density. It resists pressure, distributes weight, and is non-slip, though doesn't wick or absorb sweat. It's usually used in thin layers (3/4-inch or less).
- **Open-cell foam.** Both softer and more flexible than closed-cell, it's the standard for chairs and regular foam mattresses. It breathes and conforms to the shape of your horse's back, with cushioning that gives and bounces back. It can, however, bottom out under pressure, depending on thickness, and tends to hold heat.
- **Memory foam.** Used in Tempur-pedic mattresses, it's similar to open-cell foam in function and use, only slower to compress and bounce back. Heat causes it to soften, and it can also bottom out under too much pressure.
- **Supracor.** A space-age honeycomb material used in hospitals to prevent bedsores, it breathes and cushions well, but is relatively expensive.
- **Gel, air bladders.** Some pads use gel inserts or air bladders to create specialized types of cushioning for high-performance needs. Depending on construction, the plastic bladders that contain the gel or air don't breathe and can trap heat, and the squishiness of the gel/air can also affect stability. As with all pad options, get an expert's input. □

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LEFT: As a rule of thumb, you should have at least one to two stacks, or folds, at the bottom of your jeans when standing. **RIGHT:** This'll ensure that your pants are the proper length once you're in the saddle.

Long Enough?

There are few fashion faux pas more embarrassing than too-short jeans. Whether you show in a class that doesn't require chaps or you just want to look the part on an outing with friends, above is a quick guide to help you pick riding-length-suitable denim.

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Heads-Up

For correct body carriage on the rail, raise your horse's headset and elevate his shoulders and forehand.

By **Mark Stevens**,
With **Jennifer Paulson**
Photos by **Jennifer Paulson**

It's a common problem in Western pleasure horses: So much emphasis has been placed on the horse's head carriage that he loses correctness in his body. And now, with the class' focus on whole-body correctness, a too-low head and heavy forehand don't equate to success.

This step-by-step tutorial will take your horse from dumped over on his front end with his head too low, to self-carriage with an acceptable headset. Work on this drill with two hands and in the mildest Western bit you have that still elicits a response from your horse. A more severe bit could communicate "punishment" to your horse and make him hide from the bridle and travel behind the vertical. That's counter-productive to your goal; so instead use a mild bit and soft, quiet hands. →



Practice Pen

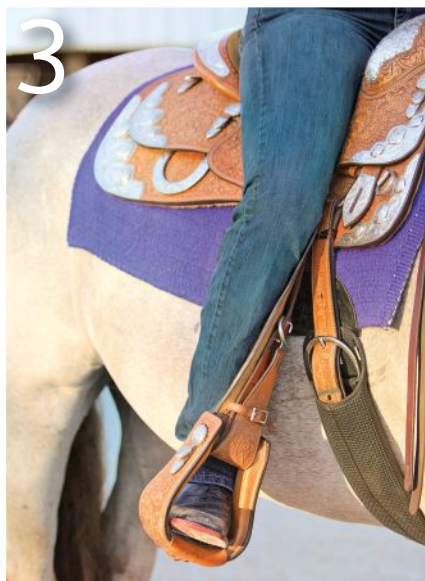
PRIVATE LESSON



1 Here's what we're starting with. Whether your horse carries his head this low naturally or it's a manufactured position, it's incorrect by current standards. Furthermore, if your horse travels like this, he's probably so heavy on his front end that it looks like he could roll over his forehead. Not only is this frame displeasing to look at, it's also hard to ride and can cause the horse to lose cadence.

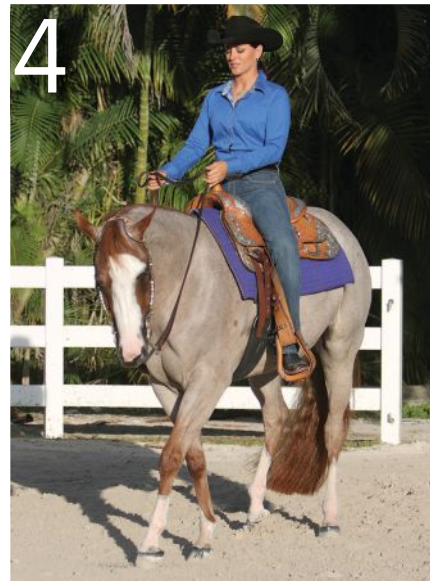
2 The first step to correct the horse's frame is to ask the horse to break at his poll. At a jog (shown here) or a walk, lift your reins about 6 inches above your saddle. By lifting and holding, the horse's head, neck, and shoulders should follow. If the horse doesn't respond at this hand height, lift them higher, to about 12 inches above your saddle. Remember that this isn't a familiar position for your horse's head, so be patient.

3 With the horse's head, neck, and shoulders elevated, fan your legs—use a light bumping motion from your knee down to help drive your horse up into the bridle. The fanning leg motion isn't quick or hard; your legs thump

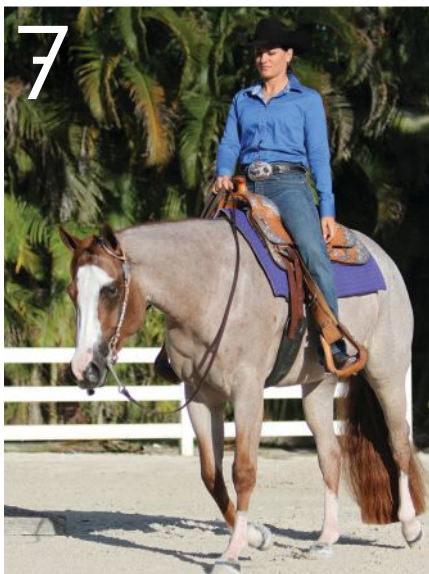


on the horse's sides in cadence with his stride. This helps drive your horse's hindquarters underneath and elevates his back. Once your horse is comfortable traveling with his head, neck, and shoulders elevated, you'll move on to the next step.

4 Turns on the hindquarters and forehand help familiarize you and your horse with body positioning that will come together in Steps 6 and 7.



For the hindquarters turn, pick up your left hand slightly higher than your right hand, which helps push the horse's shoulder to the right. Add left-leg pressure as needed, according to your horse's response, removing the pressure when he takes a step. This maneuver engages your horse's back and shoulders, which helps make the horse more comfortable with elevating his front end. Your horse's left foot should make a long, sweeping motion



in front of the right foot when turning to the right, and vice versa to the left. Work on this in both directions before moving to the next component.

5 Next, a turn on the forehand helps your horse engage his hindquarters to drive from behind, which also elevates the horse's head, neck, and shoulders. Move your horse's hips to the left by placing your right leg slightly behind the cinch, with similar pres-

sure to what you used in the haunches turn. Keep your left hand elevated above your right hand and slightly over your horse's withers to block the left shoulder from moving. When properly executed, the horse's right hind leg will reach under his belly and cross in front of his left hind leg, which encourages the desired reach underneath his body.

6 Now you'll combine the steps in Photos 4 and 5 to achieve a solid frame while traveling. Work at a gait and in the direction that your horse is most comfortable so that your horse isn't struggling with direction and gait while trying to understand this essential portion of the exercise. I call this portion "Position—Transition—Reposition."

In a corner of the arena, begin with a turn on the haunches to the right to engage the horse's left shoulder; then turn your horse on his forehand to the left to engage his right-hind push leg. Stop and settle to complete the Position phase. This should set your horse up for a proper lope departure—the Transition phase. Once you're in a lope on your left lead, reposition your horse again as you did for the turn on the

hindquarters by lifting his left shoulder up and over slightly, and as you did in the forehand turn by pushing with your right leg slightly behind the cinch to engage his right hind leg.

7 With repetition and patience, your horse will raise his headset and lift in front, which will allow him to reach deeper underneath himself and drive from behind for improved gaits and a better chance at success in Western pleasure. □

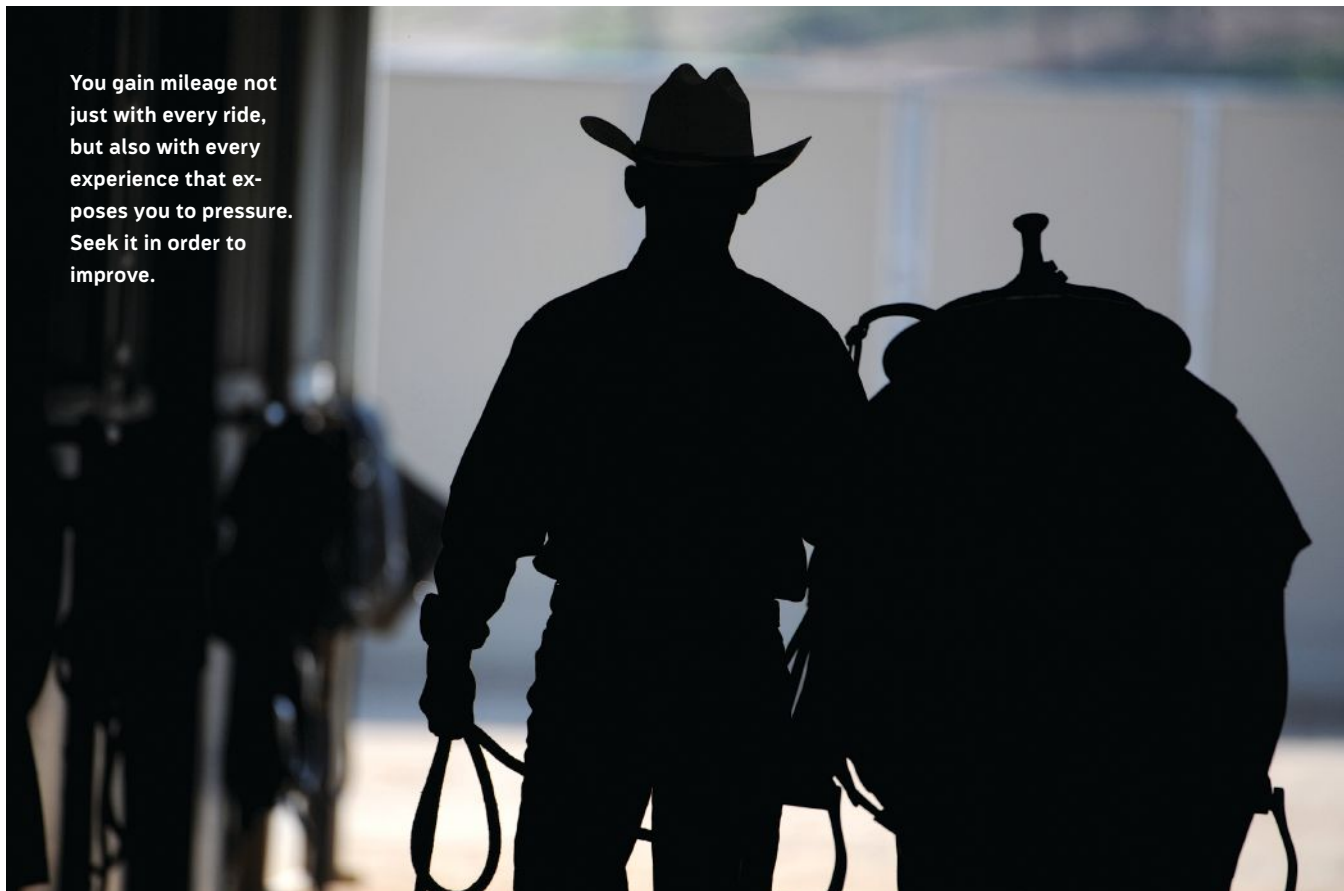


Mark Stevens trains all-around horses and coaches youth and amateur riders for AQHA competition from his facility just west of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. From beginner riders to world champions, Stevens' goal is the same: To communicate humanely and individually with horsemen and equine partners. Stevens' associate Stephanie Armellini is shown in these photos. Learn more about Stevens' program at markstevenshorses.com.

Practice Pen

BOB AVILA'S WINNING INSIGHTS

You gain mileage not just with every ride, but also with every experience that exposes you to pressure. Seek it in order to improve.



Mileage Plan

Mileage equals experience, and how you get it makes a difference between good miles and bad miles on your horse's odometer. Yours, too. Here's how to steer in the right direction.

By **Bob Avila**, With **Juli S. Thorson**
Photos by **Cappy Jackson**

You've probably heard it said about a horse or rider that he or she "just needs more mileage." It equates to needing more practice and experience, whether it's toward a show-pen goal or any other form of training and riding.

When it comes to gaining experience

with horses, there's no such thing as "free miles." You have to work for what you get, and you don't get more than you put in.

However, there is such a thing as getting off-track or missing the right road in the first place. In either of those cases, it's also quite possible that you'll put on bad miles instead of good ones and set your progress back. Your horse could suffer, too. By practicing them, horses learn poor habits as quickly as they learn good ones, maybe faster. Once you dig yourself down into a bad-habit hole with your training, you have to dig back out before you can go forward.

I'll help you create a good-mileage plan by giving you four main steps to take. Although my main focus is on training

show horses and riders who show, you can apply the steps to any other kind of riding or horse-related goal.

To Earn Good Miles

Step One: Nothing beats regular time in the saddle at home. It's really pretty simple: The more you ride and the more consistently you do it, the better you'll know your horse and the faster you'll develop his abilities and yours.

This doesn't mean you should go around in mindless circles for an hour every day. It does mean you should identify weak areas—your horse's stiffness to the right, let's say—and prioritize improving those weaknesses on a consistent riding schedule. If you take lessons, it means you commit to attend-



To make sure you aren't going the wrong way in your training, avoid riding alone all the time. Otherwise you get no feedback.

ing them. You do have to practice doing what you want to do, and consistency is what separates the successful rider from the one with lots of excuses.

Step Two: Add some pressure to your time in the saddle. Just like learning to lope or change leads, the ability to shake off mistakes, remain positive, and come back from failure is a skill that requires practice. It may not be pretty for you at first, but this is a form of necessary mental mileage.

Everyone defines and handles pressure differently, and there are different levels of pressure, too. The show pen isn't the only place to challenge yourself with pressure. You can add it to your saddle time by having someone video you for critique, for example, or by riding your horse in lessons or a clinic with a respected trainer. The important thing is to seek out pressure, not avoid it.

Once you do add pressure to your riding, you can expect to make mistakes and have some failures. This happens to everyone and goes with the territory; if you can't handle failing, you can't improve in general, and you can't learn how to win, either.

Step Three: Avoid riding alone all the time. When you aren't riding with others, you aren't able to get second opinions, and can end up developing bad habits or training your way into problems. If there's absolutely no way for you to ride with others, get someone to come and watch you ride...or put up mirrors in your arena!

Step Four: Ride with others who are more advanced or talented than you are. I'm a firm believer in riding "above yourself" every time you get the chance.

Let's say you're a 5 on the 1-to-10 rider scale. You'll advance much faster by riding with 8s when you can than you will by staying with other 5s all the time. □

HorseandRider.com

Bob has more good advice on the topic of "How (and Why) to Find a Trainer," at HorseandRider.com.



A multiple AQHA world champion, Avila has also won three NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurities, the NRHA Futurity, and two World's Greatest Horseman titles. He received the AQHA Professional Horseman of the Year honor. His Avila Training Stables, Inc., is in Temecula, California. Learn more at bobavila.net.

BUZZ OFF

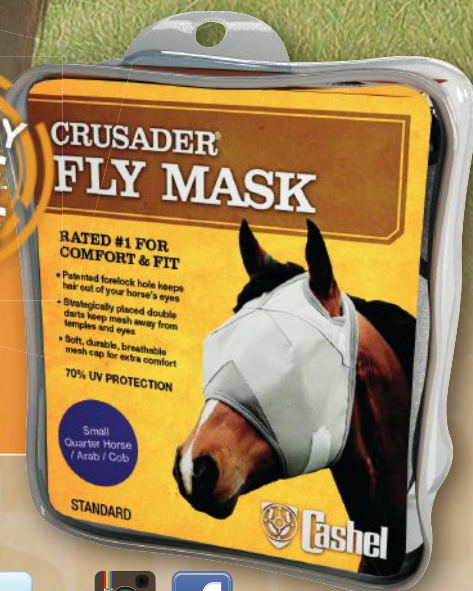


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Practice Pen

CONFORMATION CLINIC

Evaluate the conformation of these 2- and 3-year-old Tennessee Walking Horse geldings and place them in your order of preference. Then see how your choices match up with our expert judge's.

Carol Camp



Camp studied animal science at Middle Tennessee State University and is the founder of the Pleasure Tennessee Walking Horse Association of Tennessee. She trains horses and coaches amateur riders at her facility, Canaan Farm, in Franklin, Tennessee.

Camp holds judge's cards with the National Walking Horse Association, the United Mountain Horse Association, Rocky Mountain Horse Association, and Walking Horse Owners' Association. She's judged the United Mountain Horse World Championships, the NWA National Championship Show, and the Rocky Mountain Horse International Championship.



Walking Horses are difficult to judge in photographs because movement is just as important as conformation; a horse should be smooth and gaited in addition to having quality structure. A Walking Horse should also have good bone. A medium-boned horse will have sturdy feet and legs that'll keep him sound without inhibiting movement.

His head should be proportionate with his body and have a straight or slightly convex-nose profile. His neck tie-in should be high, and his neck should be upright. The slope of his shoulder should be at a 45-degree angle from the scapula to the humerus bone. His legs should be more forward-set than is typical for other breeds. This is likely to make travel easier, as the horse will be predisposed to a long, reaching stride.

A Walking Horse should have a strong, short back and level topline. Elevated hip height is a major fault in the breed. A horse should also have a longer underline than topline. There should be maximum length from the point of his hip to the point of his hock, with a long hipbone that's set far into his back. He should have a gentle slope to his croup, rather than a flat and level croup, with a high-set tail. He should also have short cannon bones. His front cannons should be perpendicular to the ground, but slight toe-out deviation is acceptable. His rear cannons don't need to be completely perpendicular to the ground. They can have some forward slope, but shouldn't be so angular as to be considered sickle-hocked. Slight cow-hock conformation also isn't as great a fault in this breed as in others. →

Practice Pen

CONFORMATION CLINIC

First: Gelding B

I like his overall balance; it's the most pleasing of the group. He has the most length from the point of his hip to his hocks. He has nice, short cannon bones, which create low hocks. This conformation should predispose him to good hind-end carriage. The biggest differentiating characteristic between this horse and the other two geldings, and which played the greatest role in his placing, is his shoulder's angle and length. It's well laid-back,

and the point of his shoulder is toward the front of his body. He'll have a long, reaching stride with this conformation.

Gelding B would benefit with more overall substance. His lightness makes him appear to be long backed, but if you look at the point of his hip, it's clear that his back is of good length, and it's his lack of musculature and body mass that's the issue. He needs more muscle along his topline, his loin, and his neck.



I'd like to see denser bone as well, but since he's young and likely still developing, his refinement didn't affect his placement. Though he's thin, he has the most correct conformation.

Second: Gelding C

Gelding C has good overall balance and proportion. His neck tie-in to his shoulder is high, and his neck is upright, both positives. He's similar in quality to the first-place horse, but his shoulder doesn't have as much slope, and the point of his shoulder doesn't carry out as far in front of his body. This may inhibit his stride. I really like his back and topline. The pronounced withers and strong appearance of his

back are ideal for an under-saddle horse. His underline isn't quite as proportionate as Gelding A's in relation to his topline. He's also not as long or deep through his hip. More length from the point of his hip to his hocks would improve his conformation and rear-end drive. His cannon bones are of adequate length and his hocks are close to the ground. This'll likely enable good rear-end propulsion.



He has an attractive and well-proportioned head and pleasing look. He also has appropriate bone weight and adequate muscle.

Third: Gelding A

He's the most substantial of the three horses, with good weight of bone and muscling. His condition is more show-ready than that of the other geldings. His front legs don't carry straight down from his shoulder, and are instead slightly back. He has a low tie-in of his neck to his shoulder. The short humerus bone creates this steep-sloped shoulder and low tie-in. His topline appears to be unlevel, though it could be the photo.

He's hip-high, which is likely to affect his stride and ability to engage his rear end. He has a lower-grade slope to his hip than the other two horses; more length from the point of his hip to the point of his hock would steepen his hip angle. His cannon bones are adequate, though they could be somewhat shorter. A longer hip and shorter cannon bones would lower his hocks. His rear hock angle is appropriate for his breed. He has



a nice, round croup and low tail tie-in.

He has a nice shape to his neck, though it ties in low, and a nice head and ears.

To submit a photo of your horse to be evaluated in *Conformation Clinic*, send us a left-side profile photo of your horse (for digital photos: high-resolution, 300 dpi, in at least 3" x 5") to HorseandRider@aimmedia.com with your contact info and your horse's breed, age, gender, and height. (We welcome all breeds!) Visit HorseandRider.com for additional instructions.



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Photos by Heidi Nyland



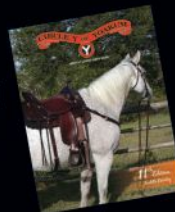
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This leather back cinch is fitted properly—not too loose nor too tight. It fastens to the rear billet midway up the horse's side with room for adjustment up or down. The connecting hobble is tightened to keep the cinch slightly forward of vertical and away from the flanks.

Western Back Cinches: Key Facts

For safety's sake, select, use, and clean your saddle's back cinch with care.

By **Al Dunning**,
With **Alexis Bennett**

The back, or flank, cinch is more than a decorative accessory for a Western saddle. It's a safety piece that stabilizes the saddle by attaching with aid of rear billets and a leather hobble strap to the front cinch. The back cinch holds your saddle snug and level to your horse's barrel, alleviating pressure to his withers because the saddle doesn't shift forward dur-

ing maneuvers. Because it's unlikely your saddle will shift in certain show events, such as Western pleasure or horsemanship, a back cinch isn't commonplace in these classes. But for hilly trail riding, cattle and speed events, reining, and other activities, a back cinch is a must.

Choose a back cinch with features that'll best suit your riding needs, then learn proper fit and care here so you can maximize the piece's function.

Materials

The back cinch is made of leather and is available in single- or two-ply thicknesses. The thickness desired depends on personal preference and riding type.

The rear cinch billets are available in

leather and poly material. While poly is more affordable up front, it doesn't have the look or longevity of leather. The connecting back-cinch hobble is usually made of latigo leather.

Fit

The back cinch is meant to fit snugly against your horse's belly, not hang inches beneath him where he could easily catch a foot. As with the front cinch, adjust the back cinch evenly on either side of your saddle so that the center of it aligns with the center of his belly. The back-cinch connector strap, or hobble, is a good indicator of proper adjustment. It should connect straight from the back cinch to the rear front-cinch dee. Tighten the connecting



This cinch is tightened and snug against the horse's underside to ensure that it's effective in keeping the saddle secure during powerful maneuvers. A too-loose back cinch isn't just ineffective; it's also a safety risk if left loose enough to catch a hind hoof.

hobble so that the cinch aligns slightly forward of vertical, where there's no risk of it sliding back to your horse's flanks.

The length and width of your cinch should be appropriate for your horse's size. Make sure it's long enough that it can easily be adjusted to align vertically with your front cinch, or midway up his side. The cinch shouldn't be so long that, when adjusted, the buckles meet your saddle pad. Though width is largely based on personal preference, your back cinch shouldn't be so wide as to inhibit movement or to be irritating.

If your horse hasn't worn a back cinch before or is ultra sensitive, you'll have to get him accustomed to the close adjustment. Gradually tighten the back cinch closer to his belly until he's used to the contact of the cinch. If necessary, make an adjustment then lead him in circles and repeat until properly fitted.

Styles

Your preferred riding activity will dictate which back-cinch style is most appropriate for your needs.

Straight. This style is best suited to riders who experience saddle tilt, but don't put much torque on the saddle. Examples include trail riding, cow horse, reining, and cow sorting events. Straight back cinches are available in varied widths, from 1 to 5 inches, in quarter- and half-inch increments.

Tapered or roper-style. Whether you compete in roping or work on a ranch, this style is best to maximize security and safety. The tapered cinch, available in straight or contoured variations, provides greater surface-area contact with your horse's underside to keep your saddle from tilting up in the back, even against the torque of a jerking steer dallied to the saddle horn. This style is typically wider, and available in widths exceeding 5 inches in half-inch increments.

Care

The underside, and especially the middle of your horse where the back cinch sits, is the sweatiest region of your horse's body. This makes proper back-cinch care and upkeep imperative. If your horse sweats excessively or

if you've collected sand, dirt, grass, or brush during your ride, you'll need to clean the cinch before storing. Minimal grime might only require a quick brushing from a soft-bristle brush or hand towel. For excessive wear, use saddle soap and a towel for a full cleaning. Regularly oil your back cinch to keep it pliable and prevent cracking.

Diligent maintenance will ensure that your cinch lasts; a well-cared-for cinch can outlive your saddle. Cracking and stretched holes are the most common wear-and-tear issues. Check your tack before you mount to avoid wrecks under saddle. Replace gear if it's irreparable, especially if your cinch appears to be cracked and splitting. □



Al Dunning, Scottsdale, Arizona, has produced world champion horses and riders in multiple disciplines. He's been a professional trainer for

more than 40 years, and his expertise has led him to produce books, DVDs, and his own online mentoring program, Team AD International (teamadinternational.com).



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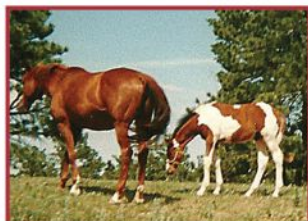
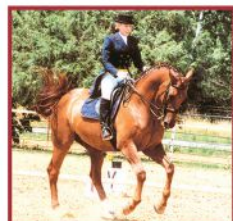
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A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white cowboy hat, a bright pink long-sleeved shirt, and a wide, ornate green and gold belt, is gently touching the face of a light-colored horse. The horse is wearing a red leather halter with a silver bell and a circular metal tag that reads "20 GREEN GRASS". They are standing against a large, textured tree trunk. The woman's eyes are closed, and she has a peaceful expression. The horse's head is turned slightly towards the woman.

When you want to see eye-to-eye again with your horse, it's time to look at him differently. Our list of strategies will help you steer the relationship out of a rut.

REDISCOVER YOUR HORSE

PERCEPTION PROBLEMS. Every relationship has them, even the one you share with your horse. It's not always easy to understand and get along with one another—especially when you each have different expectations, and even more so when your relationship partner is of another species. It is easy to end up frustrated and disillusioned when the relationship isn't working.

Maybe it's that you've hit a training plateau. Or that your horse has gotten bored and lost his "try." Or that you're sick and tired of being met with pinned ears every time you ask for something. You may even be wondering whether it's worth the effort to stay with this equine partner and his flaws. It's hard to know which feels worse—blaming your horse, or blaming yourself.

When this happens to your horse relationship, you can't exactly Google the name of a good therapist, like you can when you need help for a human-relationship problem. And your horse won't be the one to fix things. You're largely on your own. But that doesn't mean you have to go without resources.

Trust us, we've been where you are. That's why we're sharing nine measures you can take to get a better understanding of your horse, with the goal of refreshing and renewing the relationship. (Note: We'll assume your horse is sound, with tack that fits, and that pain isn't the source of his issues.) You'll find the tips particularly useful if you ride largely on your own, without regular input from a trainer or coach. That's because the tips are designed to deliver feedback and insights you otherwise might not get.

What can you do when you find yourself in a 'stuck' place with your horse? Here are nine ways to refresh the relationship, so you can move forward together.

By **Juli S. Thorson**

Reroute Your Feelings

While it's normal to have feelings for your horse and to get upset and otherwise emotional when your relationship goes sour, you'll need objectivity as a tool for turning things around. Try these tips for setting your emotions aside (or at least keeping them more in check) as you seek more info.

1 **Observe, record your horse "being him."** Rather than increase his work time right now, increase the time you spend watching your horse when he's at leisure. This

will help reveal much about what he's like as an individual—which doesn't change when you saddle up and ask him to do something. To keep the thinking side of your brain turned on, take frequent notes or photos, or even use a barn-cam. Unlike humans under observation, horses don't put up a front. The more you notice about your horse's behaviors, the more you'll know about him, for real.

Notables: If turned out with other horses, is he at the top, the bottom, or somewhere in the middle of the herd's social order? How does he challenge or try to maintain position—aggressively, meekly, or not at all? Does he prefer one gait over others? If your horse is stalled, with solo turnout, what are his eating/sleeping/self-exercise habits? How does he express himself when pleased or displeased? Do you see any connections with how your horse relates to you and what you regularly ask him to do?

2 **Revamp your grooming routine.** Grooming time is an excellent opportunity to learn about and reconnect with your horse, but not if you attack grooming like a chore

that must be rushed, or as an opportunity to pick a fight. Instead, groom your horse with awareness and care, as though you just met him, and be observant about any particular likes, dislikes, or discomforts. It's literally your hands-on chance to learn more about how his body and brain accept physical contact.

Notables: Where is your horse most sensitive, and what level of touch or brush pressure will he tolerate in those areas? What makes him move away, pin his ears, or swish his tail? What tool or technique relaxes him the best? What does he do when you touch his poll, chin, mouth corners, sides, and back—areas where you apply pressure to cue him under saddle? What correlations can you make with his reactions to your riding?

3 Record some of your rides. With the ease and availability of smart-phone video, it shouldn't be difficult for you to find someone who can record you as you interact with and ride your horse. When you play (and replay) the resulting scenes, you'll be able to scrutinize yourself for errors in your riding, or for moments when you may have over- or under-reacted to your horse's behavior.

Notables: Did you begin your horse interaction with calm confidence, or charge into it? Were you relaxed as you began your ride, or anxious and tense? How did your horse react? Did you lose your temper and concentration at any point? Why, and how could you do things differently next time?

Renew Your View

The following measures involve literal changes of perspective. You'll change what you see in your horse by changing what you look at.

4 Ride other horses. After a while, the view from atop your own horse can become so familiar that it gets stale. For instance, you become used to the length, position, and shape of your horse's neck, traits that affect everything from reins length to where your horse feels cues. By riding other



Use grooming time to explore his sensitivities from head to toe. Learn how he naturally reacts when you touch the areas affected by cues applied as you ride.

horses, you see and respond to something different, which fine-tunes your sense of feel. You also get the benefit of contrast—along the lines of “let’s see other people for a while.” This alone can rejuvenate appreciation for your regular partner.

Notables: Compared to yours, how do other horses look and feel from the saddle? Do they require more rein signal and leg pressure for response than your horse does, or less? What works on another horse that doesn't work on yours, and vice versa? When you go back to your horse after riding another one, what do you notice right away from the contrast?

5 Watch someone else ride your horse. Take this step only with care; you don't want just anyone on him, nor do you want to take unnecessary risks with another person's safety. But if circumstances allow it—you're at a lesson, let's say, and the instructor will ride your horse for you—grab the chance to view your horse under saddle from a perspective other than *from* his saddle. This different perspective, along with the other rider's own feedback, will tell you a great deal about your

horse that may be new information.

Notables: Does your horse look rough to ride, or smooth? What's his demeanor—confident, cautious, compliant, resistant? Where does he carry his head? What stands out about your horse, positive or negative? How does the other rider describe being on him? Does the feedback differ from yours, and if so, how? What can you apply from the other person's riding to yours?

6 Switch your riding venue. Let's face it, most of us ride at home, in the same arena or familiar trail circuit, most of the time. We see the same ground, the same obstacles, and the same peripheral scenery, as do our horses. Boredom should be no surprise! Make the effort to ride in different places when you can, whether away from home or on other corners of your property.

Notables: How does your horse react in a new riding place, and what does it take for him to settle in, adjust, and go to work? What bothers him? Does he do anything that surprises you? What positives does he show you that help affirm your skill at training him?

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Your horse's innate behavior with other horses is an indicator of his temperament. The more time you can spend observing him at leisure, the more you'll learn about him.

Change Gear and Gears

Although horses thrive on familiarity and routine, they also tend to stop learning once routine has been established. Among top horse trainers, the concept of "changing things up" to change results is well known and well practiced. Use the next tips to facilitate helpful change.

7 Upgrade your horse's bit. This doesn't mean to get him a bigger, more demanding bit; rather, it means to look at the quality of his bit and to step it up if necessary. A simple ring snaffle, for example, can range from an under-\$20 item stamped out in a factory overseas to a \$250-plus item crafted and balanced by hand, with price and quality points in between.

Notables: When given a better bit and a chance to get used to it, how does your horse respond? Pay attention to chewing, salivation, degree of flexion, and overall sense of comfort; it's common to see improvement.

8 Ride your horse in a clinic. These days, riding clinics are available for every discipline and ability level and in most drive-distance locales. By attending one, even if outside your chosen

sport, you'll get instruction, riding practice, feedback, and many insights to take home. You'll also get the clinician's experienced-eye evaluation.

Notables: What does the clinic reveal about your horse? What does it confirm? What tips or exercises got you the best results? What does the clinician think about your chances for success with your horse?

9 Start your horse over again. Sometimes, the best thing you can do for any relationship is to take it back to Square One. Forget your horse's real age for now, and pretend he's a colt that's never been started. With two-handed riding, preferably using a quality snaffle, go through all the prep and slow, careful training steps you'd apply for training a brand-new young prospect. If your horse has any hidden holes in his training, this is how you'll find them.

Notables: What's easy for your horse? What's hard? Where do you find resistance or lack of understanding? What are your "colt's" physical limitations (one-sided stiffness, for example)? What do you learn that applies to issues you identified earlier in your horse? □



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Oh, My Aging Back

Learn how your horse's back changes as he grows older, and what steps you can take to protect him from age-related problems that can arise.

By
**Barb
Crabbe,
DVM**

Photos
By
**Jim
Bortvedt**



Just as you can't afford to ignore his feet, you also can't take your horse's back for granted. It'll change as he progresses through various life stages, and those changes will have consequences that require good management.

'The history of mankind is carried on the back of a horse...'

Author unknown

Throughout history, the horse's back has carried soldiers into battlefields, monarchs through their kingdoms, and messengers across the land. These days, your horse's back carries you down the trail, around the show pen, and over obstacles.

If your horse's back is weak or sore, chances are the ride won't be a pleasant one for him. He'll probably pin his ears and swish his tail when he's working. If it really hurts, he may simply plant his feet and refuse to move at all. In fact, back pain is probably one of the most common causes of bad behavior and training challenges with a horse. And if your horse isn't happy, no one's happy!

I'm going to teach you about your horse's back, and how to keep it healthy as he ages. I'll begin by giving you an overview of back anatomy, and will describe the most commonly diagnosed back problems you're likely to encounter.

Then I'll divide your horse's life into three important phases: his youth, his prime, and his slow decline as he reaches his golden years. During each phase of your horse's life, he'll experience different physical challenges—and these challenges can affect his back. You'll learn what these challenges are,

and what steps you can take to combat them through the ages.

Basic Back Anatomy

The equine back, consisting of bones, ligaments, cartilage, and muscles, is far more complex than what you can see with your naked eye. The vertebral column can be divided into five sections: cervical, thoracic, lumbar, sacral, and coccygeal. The sections that make up your horse's back include the 18 thoracic and six lumbar vertebrae, and extend from just in front of his shoulder to his pelvis.

The thoracic vertebrae are constructed with a tall dorsal spinous process that extends up to form his withers and the ridge of his spine, and provides attachments for the muscles of his neck and forelimbs. Each thoracic vertebra is connected to a rib. The lumbar vertebrae are wider rather than tall, with processes that extend on either side to provide attachments for muscles of the pelvis and hind limbs.

Each vertebral body has a convex surface on the forward edge and concave surface on the back edge that fit together with a cartilage disk between them to form the joints of the spine. In addition, each vertebra has a process on either side that extends in a forward

direction and another that extends in a backward direction. These processes connect to one another with a small, fluid-filled joint between them. This junction is called the articular facet.

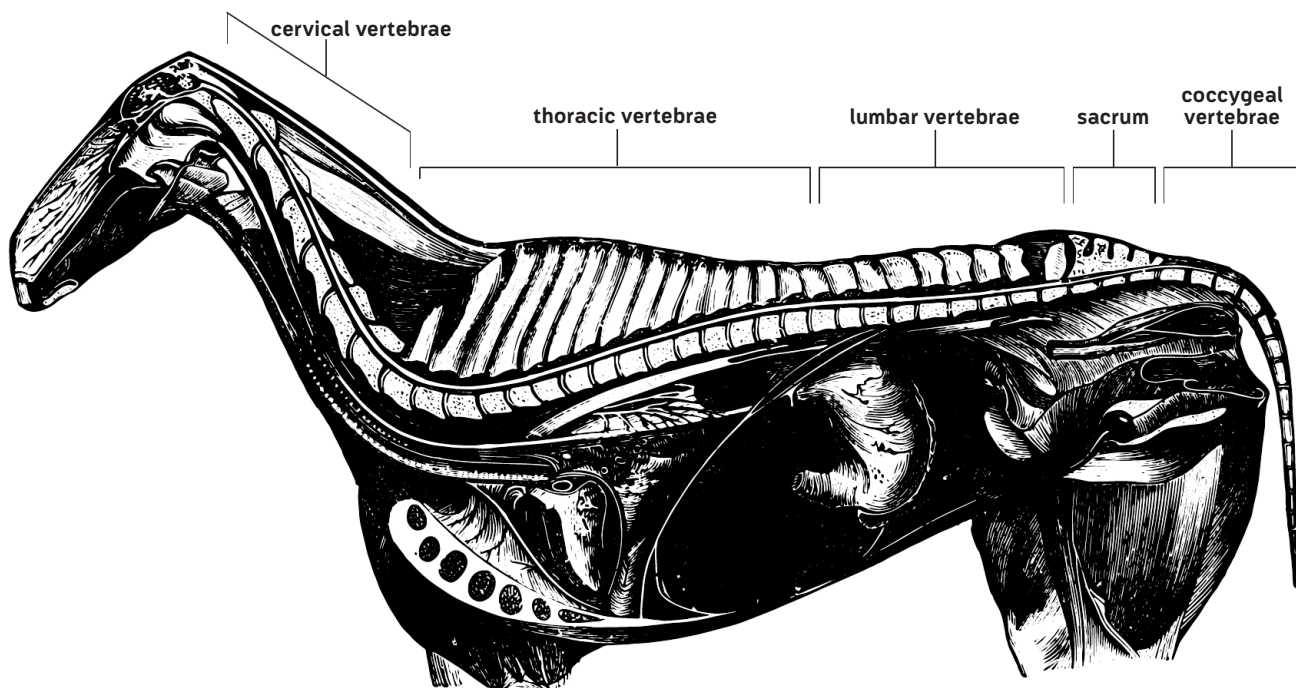
The spine is supported along your horse's topline by the supraspinous ligament that runs the entire length, from his poll to his croup (in his neck, this ligament is called the "nuchal ligament"). The muscles of his back are then divided into two major categories, the "long back muscles," and the "short back muscles."

The primary long back muscle is the *longissimus dorsi*. It originates from the lower cervical vertebrae, and extends along the full length of his back to insert on portions of his sacrum and pelvis. The primary short back muscles are the *multifida*, tiny muscles that are deeply placed along the spine to help support the vertebrae.

The *rectus abdominis* and *internal* and *external abdominal obliques*, or muscles of your horse's belly, also play an important role. They attach to the sternum (chest bone) and ribs, and provide a sling for his *viscera* or internal organs. Without these belly muscles, the weight of those internal organs would put enormous pressure on your horse's back.



LEFT: When a horse is in his prime, his back is relatively flat, with strong muscling on either side of his spine. RIGHT: By his late teens and 20s, a horse will lose strength and develop more contour to his back. His original saddle may not fit.



When Things Go Wrong

A wide variety of different things can go wrong with your horse's back. Back problems are difficult to diagnose, and not well understood. They're also challenging to treat. The following are some examples of the more common equine back problems you're likely to encounter, ranging from mild to more severe.

Pressure/friction bumps. You're most likely to see these hard lumps in locations on your horse's back where there's excessive pressure from the saddle. Although they typically don't cause him any pain, these bumps tell you that something isn't right. If you take steps to address your problems when pressure bumps first appear, you'll reduce the chances of a more serious problem down the road. Check your saddle fit, and consider some type of padding that distributes pressure across the back and minimizes friction. A sheepskin-lined, pressure-distributing pad often can help.

Muscle pain. The muscles of your horse's back can become painful for a variety of reasons, ranging from a lack of strength and instability of the spine to poor, unbalanced riding or an ill-fitting saddle. One thing is certain: If the muscles of your horse's back are sore, he's at increased risk for more serious bone-related problems. Correct riding and conditioning and properly fitted tack are

key. Acupuncture or bodywork can be beneficial for treating sore back muscles when they appear.

Kissing spines. Impinging dorsal spinous processes or "kissing spines" are a fairly common abnormality, more likely to occur in a horse with a weak or "dropped" back. As the back drops, the joints between the vertebrae extend, bringing the dorsal spinous processes closer and closer together until they eventually come in contact with one another. The condition is possible in horses that experience no pain at all. However, if this condition is associated with inflammation (heat or swelling), it can be extremely painful, especially if it is combined with a soft tissue injury. For some horses, nuclear scintigraphy (a bone scan) of the area will be the most reliable way to make an accurate diagnosis of a significant case of kissing spines. If kissing spines are truly a problem, they're often difficult to treat, and can easily become a chronic, performance-limiting problem.

Articular facet arthritis. Weakness and instability of your horse's spine eventually can lead to arthritis in the small facet joints between the vertebrae. Arthritis in these tiny joints will cause the back to become stiff and painful. Nuclear scintigraphy, radiographs, and ultrasound may all play a

part in making a diagnosis, which can be difficult. And treatment is challenging; like kissing spines, back arthritis easily can become a chronic performance-limiting problem.

What's the best answer for managing your horse's back? Recognize and take care of problems that are likely to arise throughout his life—before they progress to something serious.

Stage 1: The Younger Years

The challenge: Immaturity. Most horses are started in work when they're still very young. A 2- or 3-year-old hasn't finished growing and most likely isn't strong enough to handle rigorous training demands.

How to meet it: Be conscious of your horse's maturity level, and don't ask for too much too soon. Tailor his work schedule when he first starts under saddle to include slow, careful conditioning work. And don't expect an 800-pound youngster to carry a 250-pound man on his back. Keep the load on his back to 20 percent or less of his body weight. That's 200 pounds of rider and tack on a 1,000-pound horse.

The challenge: Changing shape. When your horse first starts in work, he'll muscle up and change his shape dramatically as he gains strength. These changes mean his saddle fit is likely to

The Dynamic Back

Recent work has demonstrated that your horse's back dimensions change after a mere 30 minutes of exercise, most likely due to shifts that result in fluid accumulating in the tissues of his back, and enlargement (called "hypertrophy") of muscle fibers.

It's interesting that these changes are more pronounced in sound horses than in those with underlying lameness issues, and in horses ridden by more skillful riders. Just another challenge to consider when it comes time for saddle fitting—best to fit after your sound horse is well warmed up by a competent rider!

change rapidly, and an ill-fitting saddle will make him sore.

How to meet it: Check saddle fit, and make adjustments frequently (two or three times each year) when your horse is young.

Stage 2: At His Prime

The challenge: Developing muscle. When your horse is mature, his musculing and body shape will continue to change. The contour of his back may become flatter as muscles grow, and even the slope of his scapula can increase as he begins to carry more weight on his hindquarters and less in front. Saddle fitting can continue to be a problem.

How to meet it: Continue to monitor your saddle fit, and plan on making adjustments at least annually.

The challenge: Hard work demands. When your horse is in his prime, he's likely to be working extra hard. All that time with a saddle on his back puts him more at risk for pressure/friction bumps and muscle soreness. He's also more at risk for other musculoskeletal injuries, and lower limb lameness can be associated with secondary back pain.

How to meet it: Always pay attention to the condition of your horse's back. Keep an eye out for pressure bumps, adjust your padding as necessary,



The condition of your old horse's back may be related to the condition of his teeth. If he can't chew adequately because of untreated dental problems, he won't get proper nutrition for maintaining muscles, bones, and support structures. Schedule a yearly dental visit.

and consider making acupuncture or bodywork a regular part of your horse's overall management. Detect, diagnose, and treat lower-limb injuries as soon as possible to avoid secondary effects on his back.

Stage 3: The Decline

The challenge: Older horses become less efficient at metabolizing protein, which is a necessary building block for muscle. Strong, healthy muscles are important for supporting your horse's back.

How to meet it: Pay close attention to the protein content of your horse's diet. Whereas a younger horse needs only 9 to 10 percent protein in his daily ration, your old timer should have a minimum of 12 to 14 percent. Unless your older horse has a specific medical condition (such as kidney failure) that means his protein intake should be limited, it's

better to feed a little too much protein than it is to feed too little. Consider adding a senior feed ration to his daily diet for a bit of extra, high-quality protein.

The challenge: Your older horse may have dental issues. If he does, he can lose up to 40 percent of the nutrients in his hay because of inadequate chewing. If he's missing nutrients, his muscle and other supporting tissues are likely to suffer.

How to meet it: Be sure to schedule a dental exam every year, and perform whatever procedures your vet thinks are necessary to maximize dental health. If your horse has dental problems that can't be fixed, a senior feed ration can help again, as these rations are specifically designed for easy chewing.

The challenge: Cushing's disease. Many older horses develop this metabolic disease that leads to muscle



When your horse has an active riding career, he's likely to get a sore back from time to time. Acupuncture, shown here, along with massage and other types of body work, can be helpful management tools for hard-working horses. You can learn to do some techniques yourself.

atrophy (and dental problems!). Once again, a loss of muscle strength means a loss of back support.

How to meet it: Test and treat for Cushing's disease. If you notice any signs typical of this disease, such as a long or even curly hair coat that doesn't shed, ask your vet whether testing your horse for Cushing's would be advised. If your horse tests positive, treatment with the medication pergolide can help minimize symptoms—and will slow down the progression of your horse's muscle atrophy.

The challenge: Lack of use. As your older horse eases toward retirement, his work demands are likely to decrease. When he's working less, his muscles will weaken and his back will lose support.

How to meet it: Don't ignore the importance of conditioning for your older horse. Long walks and careful regular

work can help keep his fitness level solid, without causing problems.

The challenge: Collagen breakdown. Collagen is an important substance that makes up the "scaffolding" that provides integrity to tendons and ligaments—especially important when it comes to the supraspinous ligament of your horse's back. Collagen breakdown is a known event with aging. Picture the older horse with his drooping lower lip (or the old lady with her sagging skin)—both the result of collagen loss.

How to meet it: There's not a lot you can do to protect collagen directly. However, by supporting your horse's muscles with proper nutrition and regular exercise, you'll minimize stress and breakdown of the supporting ligaments. □

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For more about older horses, find "Senior Horse Care Tips" on the Web site.

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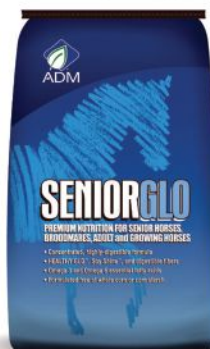
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In the market for a new horse? Be sure you don't make any of these four mistakes, as detailed by four professional trainers.



Let's face it: Horse shopping is exciting. We do it to move up to a more advanced mount, to find one for a new discipline, to get our kids or grandkids the perfect horse—even just for fun when we're not really in the market. There's a rush that only riders get when looking at for-sale horses, whether online or in person.

But that excitement comes at a price. It can cloud our vision, make us blind to issues we don't want to acknowledge, and (the worst) cause us to make rash decisions based on the emotions we feel when shopping for a new horse.

Here, four professional trainers outline scenarios they've personally experienced with clients (we've changed their names) whom they saved from making what could've been poor horse-buying choices—and one where the client bought the horse.

Read along to ensure that you don't find yourself in any of these situations on your next shopping venture. It'll save you a lot of Mr./Mrs. Wrongs in the future.

The Wrong List



The expert: La Rae Powell, Auburn, Washington; highly accomplished Arabian trainer, with more than 250 national and reserve champions across youth, amateur, and open competition.

The scenario: Jan came to Powell with an extremely specific list for her next horse. Bay, four white socks, star-and-snip face, 14.1 hands high, and a mare...*only a mare*. Jan was very proud of (and committed to) her criteria; she just knew this would net her the perfect horse for her needs. So she set out shopping online and let those in her horse network know what she was looking for.

The mistake: "Jan's list was completely superficial," Powell states. "It focused on things that should be icing on the cake, not the entire cake itself. She needed to look for more substantive qualities like what events she wanted to compete in, if the horse had the physical build to carry her and do what she wanted, if she could get along better with a gelding than a mare, and other more realistic qualities."

The reality: "I encourage my customers to look for a horse that fits into the division in which they want to compete," Powell shares. "Jan could've found a horse with all of those items she sought, but the horse probably wouldn't have possessed the qualities she needs to be able to ride and show the horse. In the end, I sat down and asked Jan questions that got to the meat of what she was looking for, rather than focus on the surface, and, using my network of trusted professionals, we found her a nice horse (a gray, 14.3-hand gelding) that she shows very competitively." →

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The takeaway: Analyze your real needs for what you want to do with the horse, and be flexible with the cosmetic qualities you desire.

Free Isn't Free



The expert: Julie Goodnight, Salida, Colorado; clinician who helps riders in person through clinics and demonstrations and worldwide via her

RFD-TV show, "Horse Master, With Julie Goodnight."

The scenario: Veronica, a 16-year-old, horse-crazy girl, wanted to upgrade to a more advanced mount. A beautiful Paint gelding came along at the exact right price for her parents—free. Veronica loved the horse from the moment she saw him.

The mistake: "The seller was honest and disclosed that the horse had the early stages of navicular," Goodnight shares. "Veronica was quickly progressing in her riding abilities, and the truth of the matter was that the horse wouldn't be able to keep up with her

long, as his condition degraded and she continued to improve as a rider."

The reality: "This horse would've only been 'perfect' for Veronica for a very short time," Goodnight laments. "She's a young, up-and-coming rider who'd now be responsible for the very expensive upkeep of a horse with a deteriorating navicular condition. I had a long, hard talk with Veronica and her parents. They continued to hang onto the 'free' price point, but I told them that simply wasn't the case. Even in his short usable life for Veronica, he'd require extensive management to remain sound, which isn't cheap. Furthermore, when he couldn't keep up with the girl anymore, they'd have to go out and buy her another horse, too. Then they'd have two horses to pay for, one of them requiring a lot of maintenance. Finally, and possibly most difficult, Veronica would've been hopelessly attached to the Paint horse when it came time to make a tough choice about ending his suffering. Veronica and her family decided to pass on the 'free' horse and we used our network to find something that she can ride for a long time and progress with as she learns."

Who's in Your Network?

One commonality in all of these scenarios is that the best purchases required using the rider's and/or the trainer's network in a variety of ways. To help you make the best purchasing decision, be sure that you develop strong, reputable, reliable relationships with the following people in your horse community.

Trainer: Your professional trainer has an extensive network, comprised of many of each of the industry types on this list.

Veterinarian: If the horse is local, perhaps your vet is familiar with the horse or the seller or knows someone who's connected.

Farrier: Similar to your veterinarian, your farrier might be acquainted with someone associated with the for-sale horse.

Fellow Competitors: Riders you compete against might be from different regions and have insight on non-local horses.

Barnmates: If you don't work with a trainer but board, your barnmates could know something about the seller or the horse.

Neighbors: Living on horse property offers many bonuses, one of them being neighbors who are likely also involved in the business.

Industry Insiders: Show managers, retailers, scribes, judges—they all have close ties to the industry and can offer insight or a phone number to get more information.

The takeaway: Inheriting a horse with a long-term problem, even if he's free up front, is expensive in terms of vet care, corrective shoeing, pharmaceutical treatments, and supplementation. You might save \$2,500 to start, but you'll spend much more down the line.

Resources Left Untapped



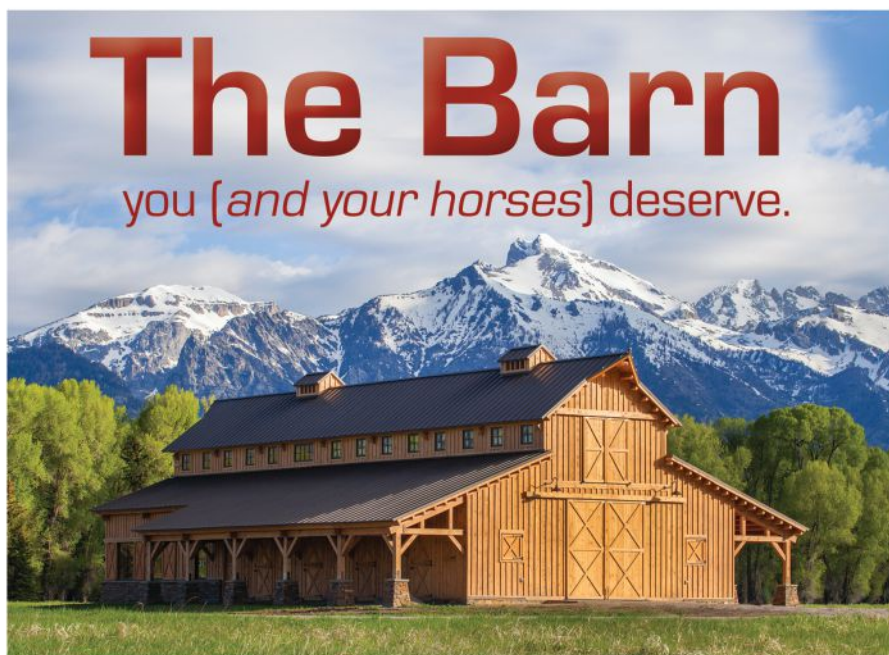
The expert: Brad Barkemeyer, Scottsdale, Arizona; lifetime horseman who does it all—starts colts, trains world champions, and coaches amateur and youth riders.

The scenario: Monica saw a well-bred horse in her price range that was for sale in an online auction. The auction situation gave her a sense of urgency—it's exciting and impulsive. She thought she'd miss a great deal if she didn't move fast, so she bought the horse sight-unseen, and then called Barkemeyer to discuss her purchase after the fact.

The mistake: "Monica didn't use any of her resources to investigate this horse," Barkemeyer shares. "If she'd come to me first, or anyone else in her network of riders, veterinarians, friends, etc., we could've saved her time, frustration, and money."

The reality: "Monica purchased a horse that looked good on paper but in reality was not a good fit," Barkemeyer shares. "When she called me to tell me about the purchase, she was so excited about her new horse! I felt terrible breaking the news to her that I knew the horse and that he had a reputation of being unsound. I knew the trainer that had him before and that he had issues keeping the horse sound. I'd have told Monica to wait and that we'd find her a

Photo courtesy of Brad Barkemeyer



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Advice for Newcomers

Most of our readers are experienced horse people, but just in case this is your first time purchasing a horse or you're coming back to the industry after an extended hiatus, here are a few nuggets of advice as you go on your horse-shopping journey.

- Don't get wrapped up in the excitement of the adventure. Realize that you'll probably take a close look at a few—if not 10 or more—horses before you find a suitable option. Keep your emotions in check.
- Interview trainers and barn managers to find your spot. Ask about their training schedules, competing, philosophies, and care practices. See if their sense of humor and personality are compatible with your own before you choose a barn or trainer.
- Don't even bother looking at a young horse. If you're not a skilled rider, there's no need to waste your time looking at unstarted or green broke colts. Learning together isn't going to make for a positive experience for you or the horse. Instead, look for the horse in your price range with the most experience so you can learn from him.
- Establish a budget you can live with. Realize that the cost of the horse is often the least expensive part of this endeavor, when you add up board, training, veterinary and farrier care, supplements, tack—the list goes on.

horse within her budget that fit her needs by using our network. With one phone call, she could've saved herself the poor purchasing decision. Instead, Monica is faced with the challenge of managing a soundness issue rather than being able to enjoy her new horse. Disposition, trainability, and soundness are three very important characteristics that need to be included in a purchase discussion, perhaps even before athletic ability and performance, especially in circumstances such as Monica's. I'm not saying all Internet horse sales result in bad buys, but they're gaining a reputation for turning over problem horses with veterinary and behavioral issues, as in her situation."

The takeaway: Your resources in your network of horse friends and acquaintances, as well as professionals like trainers, veterinarians, and farriers, is invaluable. Use it to your advantage, and spend time investigating a potential purchase before you buy.

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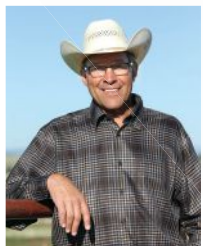


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Unachievable Goals



The expert: Bill Bormes, Castle Rock, Colorado; go-to AQHA trainer for select-division exhibitors, aged 50 and over, for multiple events, as well

as being a competitive open rider.

The scenario: Margret, a 70-year-old rider, was looking for a new horse to be competitive in AQHA select-division classes. She focused solely on Quarter Horses in her search.

The mistake: “Instead of fully exploring her options, Margret was completely hung up on buying only a registered Quarter Horse,” Bormes says. “It’s what she knows, and often what we focus on in my barn, but it’s not the only option.”

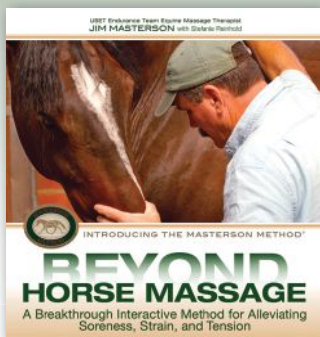
The reality: “Here’s a harsh truth: at 70 years old, Margret wasn’t going to be as competitive in AQHA classes, even in the select division,” Bormes confides. “Her competitive spirit, drive to succeed, and desire to win was still very strong, but her body just doesn’t participate like it used to. To fulfill her need to be competitive, I

advised her to broaden her focus. Yes, she should look for something she could show in AQHA events, because she’d miss being with her friends and barnmates at those shows. But I suggested she could do something I’m advising more and more: She could add color-breed options to her search. By looking for a color breed—a horse in the palomino or buckskin registry, or even a Paint or Pinto—she could show at those events, too. With the additional class options these venues offer, I’m finding opportunities to still be competitive. After diligently searching, I found her the perfect horse—a palomino gelding that’s eligible for four divisions, PHBA, APHA, PtHA, and AQHA events.”

The takeaway: Take a hard look at your goals and identify the reality of your situation. Sometimes a trusted confidant—a friend or trainer—can help you get the most realistic view of your options and help you find the right direction to turn. □

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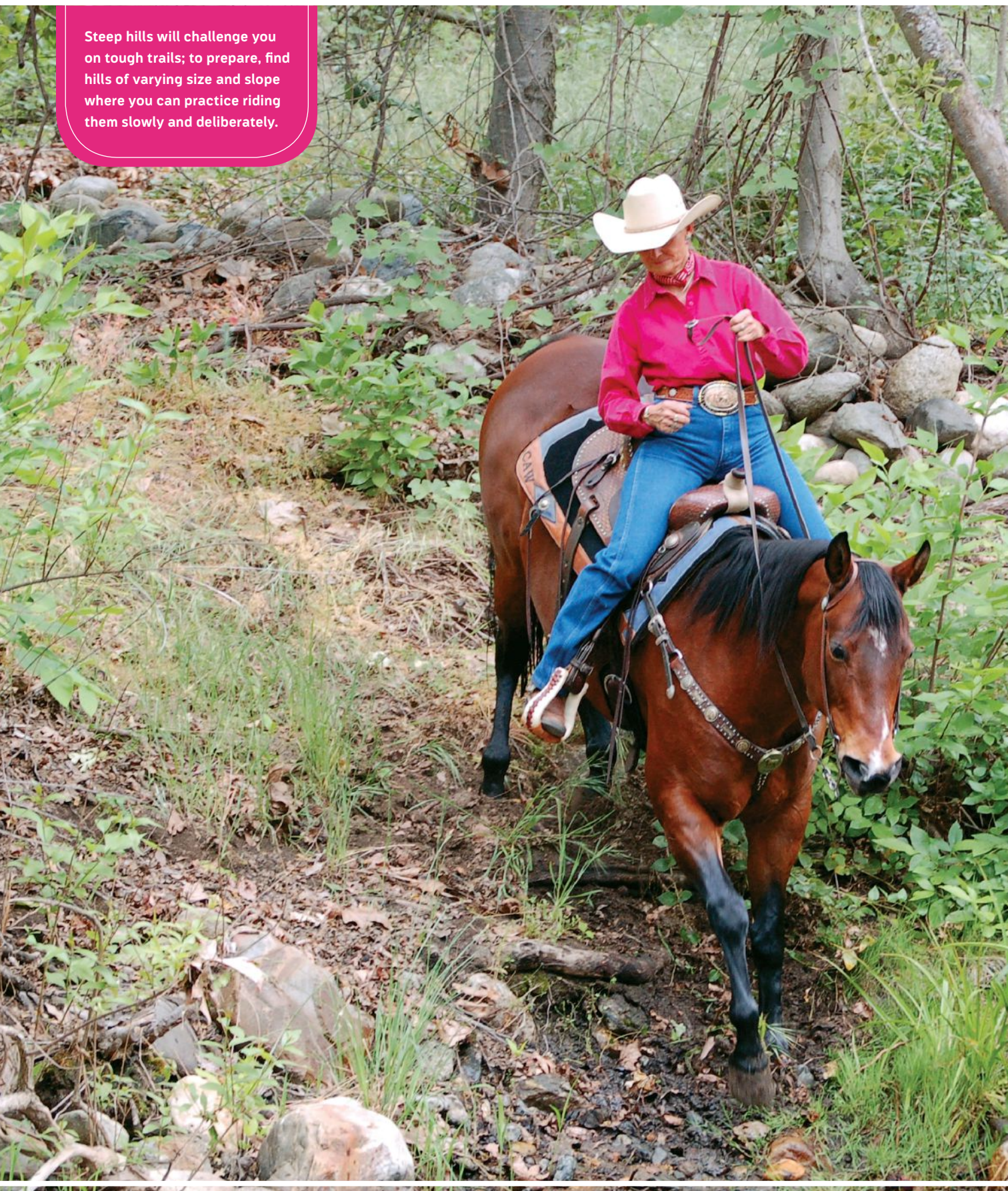
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taming tough trails

Here's obstacle work to prepare you for rugged trail rides and 'extreme' challenges. Bonus: It's loads of fun!

By **Christy Wood**, With **J. Forsberg Meyer**
Photos by **Tom Marshall**

Do you and your horse enjoy rugged trail rides?

Or competitions that feature “extreme” trail challenges? If so, you’ll benefit from the tips and exercises on these pages. I use them to prepare for the Appaloosa Horse Club’s Chief Joseph Trail Ride, a formidable multiple-day journey that retraces the 1877 “flight to freedom” of the Nez Perce Indians. Over the years, as the ride works its way from Oregon through Idaho and Wyoming to northern Montana, riders face the challenges of varying terrain and obstacles. Steep hills, narrow trails, water crossings, and deadfalls are all common.

Using a little creativity and working mostly at home, you can ready your horse for these types of obstacles; I’ll show you how. And, even if tough trails aren’t for you, this work is terrific training for your horse. It’ll strengthen the connection between the two of you, plus it’s a *lot* of fun.

Ready? Let’s go. →



make a splash

Trail challenge: Water crossings. The very words can send chills up your spine if you don't frequently ride your horse through streams and rivers. But, if you want to go on major trail rides, you *will* cross water, so get ready for it.

Tame it: By getting your horse's feet (and more!) wet, a little at a time.

Here's how: The most logical practice involves natural creeks or streams near you. Enlist the help of a friend with trail experience, as the easiest approach is to follow the lead of a horse that doesn't hesitate at water. If a stream isn't available, a lake or pond can substitute. If you don't have a seasoned horse to follow, ride back and forth at the water's edge, with turns that get you closer and closer to the water until your horse's feet start touching it. Let your horse sniff the water, then keep urging him through it.

Make-it-work tips: Be patient and give your horse time to discover the water won't hurt him. You can even start this work right at home, using a 4-by-4-foot water box (see photo). Build one of 2-by-6-inch pressure-treated planks, with a 1-inch plywood bottom; caulk



If possible, practice water crossings on real streams (top), giving your horse time to learn the water won't hurt him. (Following an experienced trail horse is a huge help here, if need be.) You can also begin your water work at home, with an easy-to-build water box (above).

all seams, then add water just before use. Take the time that's needed to get your horse to step into and through the water box calmly. Your goal is to make water no big deal.

step over and through

Trail challenge: Deadfalls. Consisting of logs and fallen tree branches that

cover the trail, deadfalls are common on real-world rides. I've ridden over several that were belly-high to my horse.

Tame it: By practicing on deadfalls you create yourself.

Here's how: Build your practice deadfall using railroad ties and/or downed tree limbs, staggering their positioning. Start with the pieces all lying flat



on the ground; then, as your horse becomes accustomed to picking his way through, gradually raise some of the pieces on top of others (see photo). Your horse must learn to figure out how to navigate a deadfall, so encourage him to drop his head and examine it, giving him time to think things through.

Make-it-work tips: If your horse is really hesitant, start with just a few ties or small logs spaced out as on a trail-class course, then gradually bring them closer together and start crossing them and building them up. Remember, trees come in all sizes, so you must accustom your horse to picking up his feet higher than he must for a simple log crossing.

dig in, climb up, inch down

Trail challenge: Steep hills. Horses typically handle moderate hills easily, but trail blockages can sometimes require even steeper ascents—and descents, which can be more daunting.

Tame it: By finding and mastering some real hills.

Here's how: Drawing again on that trail-veteran friend, haul with him or her to a locale that offers different-size hills to practice on. Horses often want to hurry up and down slopes, so insist that your horse go slowly and pick his way carefully right from the start. Following your trail-veteran friend should make this doable. Going downhill on steeper slopes, zigzag initially to lessen the angle, gradually asking for

Create “deadfalls” using logs or railroad ties (top), gradually making the step-overs higher and more complicated. Hill work (below) should include both up and down slopes; don't let your horse rush.

Get Fit and Ready for the Trail

You and your horse require hours of riding to get physically fit for a multi-day trail ride, especially if that trip will be in higher elevations than where you normally ride. Even though my horses are ridden five days a week for lessons and regular trail rides—with some competitions thrown in as well—I start my extra endurance conditioning six weeks ahead of my departure for a weeklong ride. I build up my riding time gradually.

To best target your preparation, contact the trail-ride coordinator for details of the trip you'll be taking: Terrain? Obstacles? Elevations? Likely temperatures?

Also ask the trail coordinator for the necessities you'll need to bring. These may include a knife (or multi-tool such as a Leatherman), hoof pick, vet wrap, and other first-aid items, as well as water for you and your horse (I use camelback water containers—one over the top of my saddle bag and the other in front of my saddle horn).

Check your gear before your trip as well. Make sure there's no loose stitching or screws, and that the leather is strong enough for the task at hand. Your saddle should fit your horse's back well to prevent saddle sores and hot spots.

a more direct descent—one step at a time, if need be. Once your horse is comfortable on hills of various height and slope, ask for a few back-up steps as well, going both up and down. You never know when backing up a few paces will be your only option to avoid an impassable obstacle or get around a

More Trail-Taming Success Tips

- **Don't neglect arena work.**

Your horse must be willing to yield his body and mind to you with 100-percent trust. Forehand turns, hindquarter turns, leg yields, backups, and stops will all be required on the trail, so school your horse in each well in advance of your ride.

- **Practice with saddlebags.**

I've seen people put saddlebags on their horses for the first time at the beginning of a ride—then watched as the rodeo began. Prepare ahead of time by longeing your horse with empty saddlebags, then gradually add weight equally to both sides up to the total of what you'll be bringing on the trip (lunch, water/sports-drink bottles, incidentals, etc.). Make sure you know how to keep the saddlebags balanced and securely tied.

- **Trash-proof your horse.**

Unfortunately, you will come across trash on county roads during a long ride. To prepare for this, longe your horse over tarps and empty shavings bags, then hang shavings bags and plastic grocery bags off the saddle while longeing in the arena. Progress to riding your horse over tarps and bags. Also, hang plastic bags on the trees and posts outside your horse's pen or near feeders to further desensitize him to their sound and movement (they're notoriously "scary").

- **Be mindful of your horse's burden.** He'll be carrying you plus extra weight up and down hills and for long miles every day. Practice mounting and dismounting smoothly from the ground for those times when a tree stump isn't handy. Practice from both sides, too, as you never know when the needs of the trail will require you to mount or dismount from the off side of your horse.



An easy way to prepare your horse for the sinking, unstable feeling of a bog is to ride over a pile of dry manure. Allow ample time for him to check it out as he steps in (top), then practice riding back and forth until he'll do so without fear or hesitation (above).

horse that freezes on a narrow trail.

Make-it-work tips: Be sure to check that your cinch is snug before any hill work (and outfit your horse in a breast collar, if necessary, to keep your saddle in place). If your horse tries to rush either up or down, make him stop and wait—repeatedly, if need be—until he learns to proceed rhythmically and deliberately at the pace *you* choose.

slog through it

Trail challenge: Bogs. Though not common, marshy areas *will* eventually turn up on real-world trails. Even horses willing to cross clear water often balk at mud and moist ground that sinks beneath them.

Tame it: By practicing on variable footing that mimics a bog.

Here's how: A handy substitute for a bog is your manure pile (see photos). As with all obstacles, proceed slowly, allowing your horse to pick his way carefully, one step at a time.

Make-it-work tips: Go back and forth through the pile, giving your horse ample time to accustom to the feel of unstable ground. Eventually, ask him to stop and turn around in the middle of the pile rather than simply crossing to the other side. Keep practicing until he no longer hesitates to step into and walk through the pile.

control each step

Trail challenge: Tight spaces (as between trees or boulders), narrow trails, and trailside drop-offs that require



Practice riding slowly through narrow passages, training your horse to wait for your signal to ease through (top). To prepare for cliffsides, practice standing next to a drop-off, asking your horse to remain calm and completely motionless for several minutes at a time (above).

your horse to stay calm and proceed carefully.

Tame it: With practice going through tight spaces and standing quietly next to drop-offs.

Here's how: Make use of a narrow passageway you have available or can create at your barn (see photo). Your horse must learn that when space is tight, he waits for your signal to ease his way through, so his default is to pause rather than rush. For "cliff practice," find a place that has some sort of drop, such as a raised step or an old building foundation (see photo), or even a dirt mound or the side of a hill. Move your horse slowly into position next to the drop-off, then ask him to stand calmly next to it for increasing periods of time, up to a few minutes.

Make-it-work tips: With narrow spaces, proceed one step at a time at first, paus-

ing for a moment between each step. With drop-offs, start low and work up if possible to greater heights. □



Christy Wood is a multi-carded judge, world champion trainer, extreme-cow-boy-race competitor, and avid trail rider. At press time, she was preparing to go on the ApHC's Chief Joseph

Trail Ride for the 12th year in a row. Learn about her clinics on trail riding and women's fitness (held at her Wood 'N' Horse Ranch in Three Rivers, California) at wdnhorse.com.

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Go to the Web site to review "On the Chief Joseph Trail Ride," Christy Wood's description of that demanding and celebrated ride.

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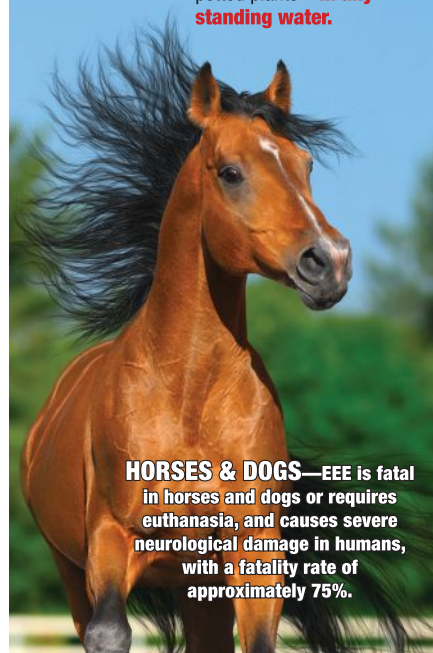
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Prep for storage. Before you store, sterilize blades in rubbing alcohol to remove any remaining dust or dirt. Apply oil to the motor (via designated holes on the body) and along

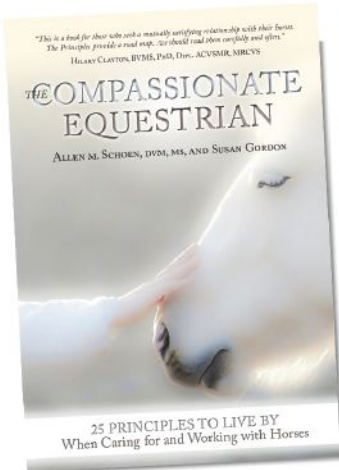
the base of the blades. Wipe excess oil to eliminate gunk accumulation and reduce future skin irritation to your horse.

Keep blades sharp. Dull blades are inefficient, don't clip hair as easily, and create lines. All these problems cause you to apply more pressure to an area or re-clip multiple times to get a clean trim. Sharpen your blades yourself, or send out for service.

Clean him first. If weather permits, bathe your horse before clipping. This'll remove dirt and dust from his hair coat that could easily clog your blades. In poor conditions, vigorously spot-clean the area you intend to clip.



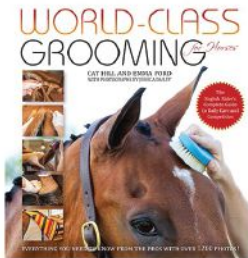
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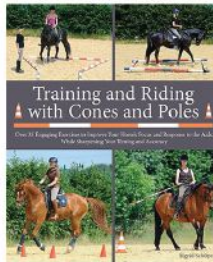
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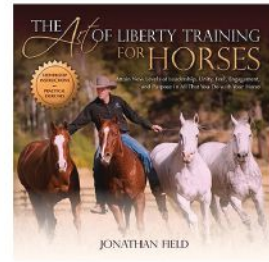
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Overcome Chronic Spooking

Ty Brazeal offers advice to help a horse past his tendency to spook at what the rider calls “everything,” despite her best efforts to desensitize the horse to the upsetting stimuli.

Produced by **Jennifer Paulson** Photos by **Linda Brazeal**



I've approached my horse like I'm on a mission, and my horse isn't reacting well. Any time you approach a horse like you'll do something to him, he'll try to flee.

Q I have a 5-year-old gelding that spooks at everything. I've desensitized him over and over, sacked him out, everything I can think of. But he still spooks at everything. I don't know what to do anymore; can you offer some advice?

JESSICA HELMS, Idaho

A I'd need more details about the horse's general demeanor when he's at work as well as when he's just being a horse, but from what I've experienced in my clinics I can say that the behavior you

describe is often a “people problem” rather than a “horse problem.” Here I'll cover two ways the rider can be the problem, and then offer my method for making a horse more comfortable with a stimulus. In this case, I'll present a plastic bag as a stimulus, but it could be a saddle pad, a hose, or anything else.

Rider on a Mission

Any time you approach a horse like you're going to do something *to him*, he's going to react negatively. It's his prey response to stay safe and alive by spooking and trying to leave when

something approaches him aggressively.

If you think about it, you probably can recall a time when you were on a tight time frame and had to rush through saddling your horse—or maybe that's just your personality type. I bet that your horse reacts negatively every time you approach him in that manner. It explains why, when you're in a hurry, your horse is probably hardest to catch. He feels threatened by your demeanor and his flight instinct kicks in.

Changing your approach can drastically change your horse's response. I'm not saying you should approach



TOP: In contrast to the image on page 74, here I'm not making any big deal about the bag. I'm not pressuring my horse with my presence or with the bag, and I don't focus on the bag. **MIDDLE:** To let my horse know that the plastic bag isn't any big deal, I longe him like I would any other time—he's comfortable longeing. I just happen to have that pesky plastic bag in my hand. But I'm careful to not call any attention to it. **BOTTOM:** Here I nonchalantly touch my horse with the bag while rubbing on his shoulder with my hand. It's a light touch, like another horse's tail swishing against my horse's body.



him meekly or fearfully, but maybe tone down your mission-like attitude. Slowing down and relaxing can make a big difference.

Inflating the Object

Here's the other common rider problem: When you introduce a new object to the horse or one that you know the horse spooks at, do you (consciously or unconsciously) make a much bigger deal out of that object than necessary?

This involves the approach I explained earlier, but also your focus. If you storm toward your horse, saddle pad in your outstretched arms, staring at the pad, you'll definitely set off an alarm for your horse, and he'll try to flee. He thinks that the pad or bag or other stimulus is out to get him. If you act like the pad isn't any big deal and approach your horse in a relaxed, calm manner, you'll probably have a better time at it.



Desensitization Tips

Here are a few tips to keep in mind when you're getting a horse acclimated to a new object or one that he resents or fears.

Take the focus off the stimulus. I have a young horse I work with that's very fixated and anxious when he sees a plastic bag. It's obvious that the trainer before me really focused on forcing him to accept the bag. He just knows

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that the bag is after him. So when I work with him, I try not to focus on the bag. I don't let him think it's a big deal. In one session, I might only be able to longe him while holding the bag in my hand to let him know that I'm not going to do what he thinks I'm going to do. I play dumb, like, "Oh, is that a bag? I didn't even notice it over there."

Take small steps toward the end goal.

Once the horse is OK with the sack in my hand while longeing, I might move it around. Or I might touch him with the sack, just like another horse might touch him with a swishing tail. It's all by accident—or at least, that's how it seems to the horse. If I don't express an intent, he won't have as many red flags.


Understand what constitutes acceptance. With this young horse, I can tell that they tried to make him stand still when the bag came out. Just because the horse stands still doesn't mean he accepts the stimulus. All that means is he's trying to please you, but you can bet he still has his eye on that bag. True acceptance of an object means the horse has no reaction at all. □



Ty Brazeal is a life-long horseman who specializes in proper foundation training for horses of all ages and disciplines. Many of those he works with go on to compete in reining, roping, barrel racing, competitive trail, and other events. He also helps recreational riders. Brazeal conducts clinics throughout the southwest and California and provides colt-starting and rehabilitation services from his home in Los Lunas, New Mexico (tybrazeal.com).

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– Dave Warren, "Tips to Correct a Lead-Dragger" January 2013

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Jan Beyers, California

SUN VISOR. My horse Dakota is part Appaloosa and has uveitis. To protect her eyes during rides, she wears one of her many fashionable sun visors.

Karen Luckett, California

Editor's note: Karen submitted a photo of Dakota wearing a visor—see page 12.

BREASTCOLLAR. My family goes on a lot of trail rides—in the mountains. The breast-collar keeps my saddle from slipping and sliding all over the place.

Megan Rizzo, North Carolina

POLO WRAPS. They adjust for every size and have so many uses—protecting and supporting joints and tendons during arena work and hauling; helping injuries heal; guarding against scratches out on brushy trails. I use them for everything!

Cassandra Carl, Oregon

'LUGGABLE LOO.' It's a plastic toilet seat that snaps on top of a bucket to make the perfect portable potty for overnight horse camping. (I use clumping kitty litter in the bottom of the bucket.)

Kelly Molnar, Texas

CARROT STICK AND 22-FOOT LEAD LINE.

Linda Garrett, Texas

Join in! In 50 or fewer words, tell us about a misfortune in your horse life that turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Respond by August 15 to jfmeyer@aimmedia.com. Include your name/home state; put “You Said It/Blessing” in the subject line.

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